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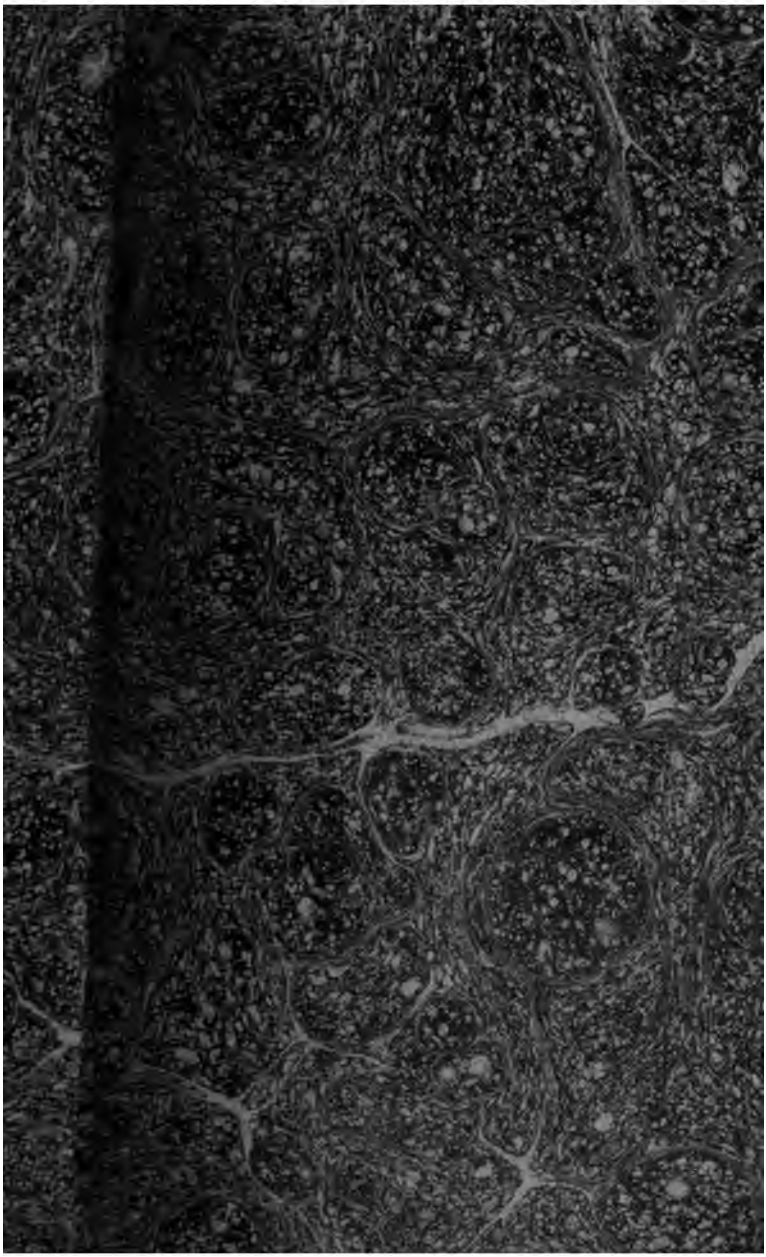

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SOLDIER'S ORPHAN:

A TALE.

VOL. I.

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Mercier and Co. Printers,
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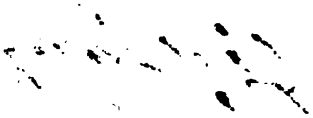

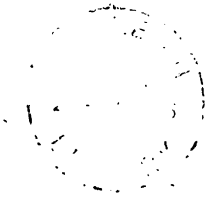

THE

SOLDIER'S ORPHAN:

A TALE.

CHAP. I.

A Man he was to all the country dear,
* * * * * * * * * * * *
Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for pow'r,
By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.

GOLDSMITH.

In a retired romantic village in the west of England, some years previous to the commencement of this history, there resided a Clergyman of the name of Howard; a man who might truly be

pronounced an ornament to the sacred profession, and an honour to human nature: his piety was pure and unaffected, his learning profound without ostentation, and his benevolence unbounded: his charity was not confined to the poor of his own neighbourhood, but extended to the whole race of mankind. It was not that charity which simply consists in giving alms, and relieving the necessities of a few individuals; it was of a more exalted nature; it extended to all sects and denominations of men. He did not thunder anathemas from the pulpit on those who might differ from him in some particulars of their creed, or who, from education, or early associations, might be led to oppose their opinions to his. Far different from this was the mind of him who sought not his own gratification, but the everlasting welfare of those committed to his care. With the gentle voice of persuasion, he endea-

voured to convince his hearers that the religion of his divine master was full of meekness and brotherly love; that it had no hatred, nor party spirit; bore no ill will to any man, but tended to promote the peace and happiness of all.

His life was in strict unison with his doctrine; it was spent in the exercise of active virtue, and universal kindness to his fellow creatures. He was revered and loved as a father by his parishioners; and held in estimation by all ranks of persons to whom he was known. His advice was eagerly solicited; and when given, either as it concerned the temporal or spiritual welfare of his flock, was venerated as that of a superior being. There was not a single family in the vicinity of his abode, or for many miles around, but could bear testimony to the goodness of the rector of M——.

Mr. Howard was descended from an ancient and honourable family, who had

possessed considerable property in the county in which his living was situated; and as there was no parsonage house in the village, he resided in the house of the manor, which came to him on the death of his eldest brother—a man whose hospitality and veneration for the dignity of his ancestors would not allow him to abridge any of the splendors which the head of that family had been accustomed to enjoy, but which the decayed fortunes of his house had rendered very inadequate to support. At his death Mr. Howard received but little addition to his fortune except the house already mentioned. It was a long irregular building, erected when strength and space were more attended to than comfort or elegance: and, as the domestic establishment of Mr. Howard was on a much smaller scale than that of his late brother, a great part of it remained unappropriated. The apartments oc-

cupied by the family were at the west end, and commanded an extensive view of the surrounding country, which was beautifully diversified with meadows and corn-fields, and embellished with groups of ancient oaks, under whose umbrageous branches the cattle found a secure and pleasant retreat from the heat of the noon-day sun, or shelter from the driving storm. The centre of the house contained a large hall, which separated those rooms from the kitchen and servants' apartments.

Like every other old-fashioned dwelling, it had that never-failing attendant, a ghost, being most devoutly believed by the peasantry to be haunted by a lady dressed in a brocaded silk sacque, with ruffled cuffs, a hoop, and little head-dress. This august personage, several old persons, who had been servants in the house during the life-time of the late Mr. Howard, declared they had seen;

and those who had not been so highly favoured, had more than once heard her walk up stairs, and down again, rustling her silks most majestically, while they have lain trembling, their teeth chattering with fear. But for what purpose she visited this ancient edifice no one could tell, though it was very gravely asserted by some, that she came nightly to lament the approaching extinction of a family, which had for centuries held a distinguished rank in the country, the present principal inhabitants being the last remaining branches of the family, of which she was supposed to be almost the head.

The church stood a short distance from the manor house, embosomed in trees, the hollow trunks of many of them proving they were nearly coeval with the venerable structure, whose "taper spire, pointing to heaven," arose gracefully from among them, and seemed to invite

the young, the old, the sedate, and the gay, to pay their devotions to the father of all good within its hallowed walls.

The family of Mr. Howard consisted of himself, a maiden sister, Mrs. Martha Howard, and a little girl named Louisa, whom they had adopted, and towards whom they both felt an affection as nearly parental as it is possible for persons to feel for one not related to them by that endearing tie.

Peculiar circumstances had thrown this child, who was now about four years of age, on the humanity of Mr. Howard: subsequent events had led him and his amiable sister to consider her as their own; and under their care she was not likely to feel the deprivation of her natural parents.

CHAP. II.

——————————By degrees
The human blossom blows; and every day,
Soft as it rolls along, shews some new charm;
The father's lustre, and the mother's bloom.
THOMSON.

YEARS rolled on, and the little Louisa, daily improving in strength and beauty, was the delight of the worthy Mr. Howard and his amiable sister. In the rising beauty of the interesting Orphan, Mrs. Martha fancied she already beheld a strong resemblance of her mother, though only known to her for a short time, and under the influence of pain. Yet hers was a countenance not easily forgotten. As she traced this resemblance, and pointed it out to her brother, he would join her, in begging of heaven that she might be more fortunate in life than the mo-

ther had been, and that the resemblance might be confined only to her virtues and her beauties.

Mrs. Martha Howard had none of that cold formality which is generally attached to ladies who have passed a certain age unmarried. She was a woman of acute feelings and sound judgment. Her temper was cheerful and conciliating; her disposition benevolent, generous, and affectionate. She had received an excellent education in childhood, which she had improved by study and application, as she advanced in life. Her reading was extensive, but principally directed to those books that improve the mind, and strengthen the understanding. Her favourite study was poetry: she delighted to dwell on the sublime flights of imagination of our best poets, and indulge that soothing, pensive sadness, so pleasing to a wounded mind, which they never fail to create in a bosom of sensibility.

Early in life she had met with a severe disappointment, having been engaged to a youth of exemplary worth, whom she had known from childhood. Their attachment was mutual: they were to have been united in a few days, when the lover was seized with a violent fever, which sunk him to the grave in the bloom of youth, and expectation of happiness.

Miss Howard, who tenderly loved him, and had even from infancy been taught to regard him as her future husband, could never be persuaded to admit the addresses of any other man. She resolved to be true to her first affection, and devote her life to the memory of him so suddenly torn from her.

The fate of Louisa's parents was in many respects similar to her own; it therefore could not fail to call forth her sympathy. She lamented the apparent cruel dispensations of Providence, which so often separates those whose hearts are so

firmly united; but she lamented it with a pious confidence, and a firm belief, that what appears cruel to us, is wisely ordained for our real benefit; that afflictions are given us as trials of our virtue, to purify our souls, and wean us from a world which we are too apt to love with more fondness than it deserves. She looked forward therefore with the animating hope of being united to him she had loved, in a better world.

It has been already remarked that she sometimes, when in a pensive mood, courted the Muses. The following epitaph of her composition was inscribed on the tomb of the unfortunate mother of her little favourite:

EPITAPH.

Let grief retire, to weep alone,
And pity's rite be sadly paid;
To her who cold, beneath this stone,
In silence and in dust is laid.

She left her aged father's side,
The victim of disast'rous love,
And o'er the bleak world wand'ring wide,
With penury and sorrow strove.

She sought yon hospitable gate,
A refuge from the storm to crave;
She found it, but, alas! too late—
She found it—only in the grave.

Thus amiable, and feeling so sensibly for the parents, it is not wonderful the child should interest her in a high degree. Indeed that heart can possess but little sensibility, whatever it may affect, which is not pleased with the innocent blandishments of childhood, and solicitous for the preservation and welfare of beings so helpless, pure, artless, and lovely.

Louisa was the playfellow and pet of the whole family, and as she grew older, and her mind began to expand, she became the pupil, companion, and solace of Mr. Howard and his sister. The former in-

structed her in every branch of useful knowledge, which she acquired with the greatest facility; and the latter added the more ornamental branches of education. The strength of her judgment, and pertinency of her remarks, while yet a child, frequently delighted and surprised her kind friends, and imparted a glow of rapture to their hearts, which amply repaid them, they would with the utmost satisfaction declare, for the care they had bestowed on her.

At the age of fourteen, Louisa was tall, and in some degree formed. The dazzling whiteness of her skin was beautifully contrasted with the bloom on her downy cheek, and the meandring veins of violet hue which appeared here and there through it: the brilliancy of her eyes, which sparkled with vivacity on joyful occasions, or melted with sensibility at a tale of woe, gave additional

charms to features the most perfect, and a countenance animated and intelligent.

She was passionately fond of Mrs. Martha Howard: her respect and affection was that of the most dutiful daughter; with unbounded confidence she submitted every thought of her heart to the inspection of her maternal friend, who beheld, with joyful satisfaction, that it was untainted with meanness, duplicity, or any vice likely to embitter her future life with remorse. Credulity was the greatest weakness observable in her character, and this her excellent friend hoped to modulate, so far, at least, as to prevent her being made a dupe to the designing and artful part of mankind. Suspicion she abhorred in any one, but more particularly in a young person: but the prudence which she wished Louisa to possess, she at present was wholly a stranger to: every feigned tale of distress, however

improbable, was implicitly believed by her; nor did the detection of frequent impositions greatly tend to make her more cautious; so ready was her hand ever to relieve, and her heart to sympathize in the distresses of others.

Mr. Howard she regarded as the first of human beings; his approbation she was always studious to obtain; his counsels were so mild, so benevolent, and so convincing. Seldom had she ever given him cause to reprove her; but sometimes the waywardness of childhood had occasioned a lapse in her duty which called for reprehension. His reproofs were then so gentle, that she was immediately sensible of her error, and knew no pleasure till she had repaired it, and thereby retrieved his good opinion.

Poor Louisa! She knew not the extent of her misfortunes: her spirits, light and elastic as the pure air she breathed, would have sunk within her, had she

known she was supported by the bounty of Mr. Howard, on whom she had no claim but that of misfortune; or could she have foreseen the ills that awaited her. But happily unconscious of her dependant situation, and thoughtless of the future, her days glided peacefully along, unmarked by sorrow, and unvexed by disappointment and unkindness.

When very young, she had frequently inquired why she had not a papa and mama, sisters and brothers, as other children of her acquaintance had? She had, on those occasions, been told that it was the will of God, and that no one could have those relations unless it pleased him to give them. "And can he take them away if he pleases?" she asked. When informed of his power, she returned, "Then I will pray to God not to take you away from me; and I will always be good, and try to please him; for what

could a little girl like me do without you?"

But as she advanced in age and understanding, her kind friends informed her more particularly of her real situation; though they did not think it necessary to tell her the whole of it; but rather led her to believe Mr. Howard had been appointed guardian of her person and fortune by her father. Their motive for this was, that they did not approve of loading her mind with too great a sense of obligation, which, they had often observed, tended to debase the heart, and render it servile; or, on the contrary, depress the spirits, which the idea of dependance seldom fails to do. They wished her to act as a free agent, and the gratitude she felt for them to be the result of affection only.

The first event that happened to disturb the serenity of Louisa, now in her seventeenth year, was the illness of Mrs.

Martha, who was fast declining into years. Her health, which had always been delicate, had lately received a severe shock, occasioned by too great anxiety.

The fortune left her by her father was but small; but as she lived with her brother, she had been enabled to follow the dictates of her generous nature, and annually set apart a certain sum for the relief of the necessitous. The interest of her fortune allowed her to do this, and supplied all her wants, which were bounded with the strictest prudence. The principal she had intended to leave to the interesting child of her adoption.

In this plan Mr. Howard had concurred: his income was more than sufficient for his wants, and in the exercise of benevolence he expended all that was superfluous. At his death, it was also his intention to leave her what he had to dispose of, as he had no relations who

stood in need of the little that he had to bestow.

Louisa had never been taught to expect an affluent fortune, but rather a contracted one, that she might early accustom her mind to be contented with the conveniences of life only:—aspiring to its luxuries, without an adequate fortune, she was taught to consider as highly criminal.

Mrs. Martha had entrusted her fortune to a banker, with whom she had for a number of years been acquainted: he was supposed by her and her brother to be a man of considerable property and strict probity. But the failure of a large house at Hamburgh had involved him in its ruin. He quitted the kingdom precipitately, and, in his turn, involved others: Mrs. Martha's property was therefore swallowed up in the general wreck.

"I do not regret it on my own ac-

count," she would say, "for I feel I have not long to live: neither do I lament it on yours; but that dear child, so lovely and unfortunate, I had hoped to have secured from absolute poverty. Oh! my brother; if you should die, what will become of her?"

Mr. Howard, who was infinitely grieved on the same account as his sister, and whose hopes of ever recovering any part of her property were very feeble, nevertheless exerted himself to sooth her anxiety, and persuade her to believe it possible.

"But if you should not, my dear sister," he would say, "I trust I shall be enabled to provide for her: it is only necessary to practise a more rigid economy, which I can, for both your sakes, most cheerfully submit to. But should the worst happen that you dread, her virtue will secure her from the greatest ills to which poverty exposes a female.

You, my dear Martha, have never before distrusted the goodness of that God, who watches over all his creatures, and suffers none to perish who put their trust in him. Remember, that he who 'tempers the wind to the shorn lamb' is able, and no doubt will, provide for the orphan who confides in him."

The tenderness of her brother, his excellent and consolatory advice from time to time, in some measure soothed the afflicted mind of Mrs. Martha; but could not entirely dissipate the uneasiness she felt, or allay her fears for the future welfare of Louisa; who, unconscious that the health of her friend was so much impaired by anxiety for her, exerted every art she possessed to amuse the languid mind of her kind instructress: or, when too ill to be amused, she would sit by her, and tenderly watch every turn of her countenance, that she might prevent her wishes, and contribute to her com-

forts. She gave up every amusement she had before partaken of occasionally; her studies were abandoned, and every pursuit neglected, that she might devote her whole time and attention to her, whom, she began to fear, she should soon for ever lose.

Alas! her fears were too well founded: the assiduous cares of Louisa, and the tender attentions of her brother, could not stay the meek spirit of the being they so tenderly loved. They had very soon the heart-rending sorrow of closing those eyes which had ever beamed with affection for them, and of beholding that form which had been animated by the most benevolent spirit, cold and insensible: but they could reflect with comfort and confidence that, though her body was mouldering into dust, her immortal part had ascended to the abode of angels, there to receive the reward promised for a life spent in the exercise of virtue.

The grief of Mr. Howard was that of a sincere Christian: he was deeply affected by her death, for in her he had lost a most sincere and disinterested friend, an affectionate sister, and a pleasing and sensible companion. But he bore the deprivation with resignation, and struggled to subdue the painful emotions which it was not in his nature to avoid feeling, that he might the more effectually check the grief of Louisa, which was violent, and he feared would be seriously injurious to her. It was the first misfortune she had ever known; therefore she felt it with more poignancy. Repeated sorrows render the heart less sensitive in appearance, though they strike deeper, and are not so soon erased: but in the spring of life, though grief is more acute, the mind happily possesses that elasticity which enables it to resist its enervating power, and recover its former serenity with greater ease than could be

expected from the violence with which it makes its first attack.

Mr. Howard had the satisfaction of seeing the sorrow of Louisa, by gentle degrees, subside, and give place to a pensive melancholy, infinitely touching and interesting. She began again to find amusement in her usual avocations, but principally in those with which the idea of her lost friend was connected.

Frequently in an evening she would wander out unattended, to pay the tribute of a tear to the memory of her whom she so tenderly loved. Mrs. Martha was buried on the same spot which contained the ashes of her mother. Lamenting this her second parent, would remind her of her early loss, which, till now, through the kindness of her who also slept beneath the cold earth, she had never felt. At their graves she would sometimes linger, till the hollow sounding bell, by reminding her of the late-

ness of the hour, would recal her mind from the train of reflections those visits never failed to occasion.

Then she would hasten towards the house, anxious to relieve the uneasiness she was aware Mr. Howard would feel, if he knew she indulged her melancholy, by frequenting the silent repositary of the dead.

As with quick step she glided along the dark avenue of tall venerable trees, in the doubtful shade of twilight, or crossed the antique hall, which led to the general sitting room, her sylph-like form might, without much effort of the imagination, have been taken for one of those aërial beings who are sometimes said to visit this lower world.

Mr. Howard, shortly after the death of his sister, put Louisa in possession of the little property she had left, which consisted chiefly of personal ornaments: he at the same time acquainted her with

the circumstance which had prevented his sister's leaving her, as had always been her intention, the fortune she had enjoyed. He further informed her how she was situated with respect to her future expectations, as he conceived it proper she should know, that she might habituate her mind to think of an humble mediocrity, before she was absolutely compelled to submit to it.

The remembrance of Mrs. Martha's kindness to her for so many years, together with the knowledge of her generous intentions towards her, though they had been frustrated, renewed her grief most forcibly. She regretted not the loss of fortune, but the friend who had been so solicitous for her welfare. "That is a loss," sighed she, "I can never recover; a loss to which fortune is a mere trifle: riches could never procure me a friend so inestimable as her I have lost: neither can they bestow happiness, except

indeed they were applied, like hers whom I lament, to the purposes of benevolence."

Louisa had admired, and imitated her friend's character as much as possible; as she rightly conceived she could not copy from a fairer model. She had studied to imbibe the same taste on all occasions, and had equalled, if not surpassed her, in many things: her taste for poetry was refined and elegant; she frequently amused herself with short compositions, and about this time produced the following lines:

To the Memory of Mrs. Martha Howard.

She who now in silence lies,
Whose lot these pensive lines impart,
Felt all life's sweetest charities
Thrown back upon her lonely heart.

No partner of her joys had she,
Whom she might own with proud delight;
No child to smile upon her knee,
Or lisp its little pray'r at night.

Yet warm benevolence and love,
That felt for ALL of human kind,
Could ev'ry selfish thought remove,
And harmonize her gentle mind.

For her, the raptur'd poet's lay
Its sweet enchantment could impart,
And fairy music stole away
Each throb of her subsiding heart.

No daughter o'er her coffin sigh'd;
But let the shelter'd orphan tell
How honour'd and how lov'd she died!
Friend of my youth, farewel—farewel!

CHAP. III.

Who, who would live, my Narva, just to breathe
This idle air, and indolently run,
Day after day, the still returning round
Of life's mean offices and sickly joys?
But in the service of mankind to be
A guardian God below; still to employ
The mind's brave ardour in heroic aims,
Such as may raise us o'er the grov'ling herd,
And make us shine for ever—that is life.

THOMSON.

ABOUT a mile from the village of M—— was a seat belonging to Sir Walter Stanley, a rich Baronet, who generally spent two or three months of the year with his family at this his paternal seat, called Stanley Hall. The remaining part of the year was passed in London, at Bath, or some fashionable watering place; Lady Stanley being a very gay woman. She had been very beautiful; but time, and too great an attach-

ment to the pleasures of a town life, had greatly impaired her attractions: yet it had not diminished her desire for them; she still pursued amusement with the same avidity as she did when first emancipated from the controul of a rigid father, who had secluded her from the world in an old constellated mansion in Yorkshire.

Sir Walter Stanley, who was young, rich, and gay, by accident saw and loved her: his proposals to marry her were soon made, and readily accepted by the father, as the lover was rich, and his daughter possessed of little beside her handsome person, and the noble blood that flowed in her veins.

The consent of the lady was not difficult to be obtained; the idea of freedom from the restraints that had hitherto been imposed on her, would have induced her to have accepted a less pleasing husband than Sir Walter's appearance

and address led her to believe she would find in him.

Nor was she deceived: enchanted with the beauty of his young wife, and the admiration she every where excited, Sir Walter entered with pleasure into all the fascinating gaieties of the metropolis: his equipage, his houses and retinue, were in the first stile of elegance and splendour.

Lady Stanley soon became a bright star in the horizon of fashion: her routs, her concerts, and public breakfasts, were the most splendid of any in town; her name sanctioned fashions the most absurd, and fancies the most fantastic: to wear a colour, a robe, or a hat, like the beautiful Lady Stanley, was no doubt thought, by the wearer, to confer some of her beauty also.

But as the novelty of a thing wears off, it becomes disregarded: Lady Stanley's routs, concerts, and public breakfasts,

continued as splendid as ever; yet they were not, as usual, the theme of every dashing lady of fashion's envy and admiration: nor did the elegance of her dress, and the brilliancy of her jewels, continue to tempt persons who could less afford it to purchase articles like them, because they were worn by her.

Some newer and therefore brighter star had now eclipsed her.

But, though she did not continue the first in the gay circles, she contented herself with joining the throng, who are never satiated with what they call pleasure, but which a rational being would call by a harsher name.

Sir Walter, indeed, began to think the constant repetition of amusements disgusting: he longed for the peace and retirement of a country life, which he rightly supposed would give him a greater relish for the pleasures of London some time hence.

He ventured to propose his plan to his lady; but she, having been so much confined in Yorkshire, could not associate the idea of happiness with a country life: she therefore immediately negatived the proposal of her husband. Her will was a law to him, who still doted on her; and not till her health rendered country air necessary, did he again renew his wish that she would retire from the noise and bustle of the town, to breathe the pure and invigorating air of *Stanley Hall*.

Her Ladyship consented to leave London, but not for Stanley Hall: "If she did again go to vegetate in the country, for Heaven's sake, my dear Stanley," she would say, "let it be in a place where the awful solitude will not remind me of my father's castle; except, indeed, you wish to kill me with *ennui*."

To oblige her, Sir Walter gave up his own wishes, and in the gaieties of a wa-

tering place, almost as destructive as those of London, passed that time he had intended to spend at Stanley Hall.

It was not till they had been married nearly five years, that they came to reside for any time there. Their family at that time consisting of three children, the eldest a son about four years of age, and two daughters, this increase of his family, and the expensive manner in which they had lived, rendered a few months of retirement absolutely necessary.

This was very soon after Louisa came under the protection of Mr. Howard, who had known Sir Walter from a child, and visited him immediately on his arrival. A friendly intimacy was soon established between the two families; but principally on the part of the gentlemen, as the dispositions of the ladies were too opposite to allow of their assimilating very cordially: the frivolity of Lady

Stanley ill accorded with the superior understanding of Mrs. Martha; but the urbanity and good sense of the latter always induced her to treat her Ladyship with good humour and kind attention, which was returned by Lady Stanley with politeness and respect. Indeed she would allow that "Mrs. Martha Howard was the most *endurable* old-maid she had ever known."

The family of Sir Walter had been much increased since their first visit to Stanley Hall, which had been repeated annually; but several children had died in their infancy. There now remained only three; the son before mentioned, and two daughters, the eldest of whom was about the age of Louisa. She was a lively, good-humoured girl, and more remarkable for those qualities than for the beauty of her person. Between her and Louisa there subsisted a warmer

attachment than girls usually form, who do not reside constantly together.

The second daughter, a year younger, was very beautiful: she very much resembled Lady Stanley in disposition as well as person: she was haughty, unfeeling, vain, and fond of admiration, even to excess, from almost an infant.

Lady Stanley, who was dotingly fond of her beautiful girl, would frequently compare her beauties with those of Louisa, who was the constant visitor and playfellow of her daughters. The comparison was always favourable to the former, which was no small triumph to her ladyship.

Every one concurred in her opinion, except young Walter Stanley, who declared the smiling blue eyes of Miss Fitzormond, and her soft curling brown hair, were much prettier than the large sparkling black eyes and raven tresses of his sister.

But this preference of her brother's never failed to swell the little heart of Armida Stanley with resentment against him, and her rival in infantine beauty.

To a superficial observer, the beauty of Armida was certainly more striking, but that of Louisa more interesting. When the judgment gave the preference to the former, the heart bestowed it on the latter: the one commanded admiration—the other love.

A few months after the death of Mrs. Martha Howard, the family of Sir Walter arrived at the hall: they were this year accompanied by their son, who had not attended them for three years before; he having spent his vacations from college, either with some friends, or with his family in another part of the country.

The morning after their arrival, Mr. Howard and Louisa paid a visit to the hall, to welcome the family again to the country: the remembrance of the severe

loss she had sustained, since parting from them, threw Louisa into an agony of sorrow. Lady Stanley condescended to sooth and condole with her, and Miss Stanley, with her wonted good-nature, exerted herself to dissipate her grief.

Their kindness had the desired effect: Louisa shortly recovered her spirits, and thanked them, with the tenderest expressions of gratitude, for their attentions to her.

Lady Stanley remarked to Mr. Howard how much Louisa was grown; but said she thought her spirits were much depressed by the late event in his family, and recommended her mixing more in society. "The solitude of the manor-house," said she, "will destroy her, if she is suffered to continue there: oblige me, Mr. Howard," continued her ladyship, "by allowing Miss Fitzormond to remain at the hall for a short time: the society of my daughters will, I hope, tend to the re-

storation of her health, and reanimate her sinking spirits."

Mr. Howard, who had with grief lately beheld the pale cheek and pensive manner of Louisa, with gratitude accepted her ladyship's polite invitation of the child of his heart.

Louisa would have declined it; but she was so strongly urged by Lady Stanley, her daughters, and Mr. Howard, that she consented to remain at the hall for a few days, but not till the latter had promised to let her hear from him every day.

Mr. Howard took his leave, much impressed with the kind attentions of Lady Stanley. He did not think before that she possessed so tender a heart, and congratulated himself on having been deceived in the opinion he had formed of her character. It gave him great pleasure to reflect that, if he should be taken from her, and she was so fortunate as to procure

the protection of Lady Stanley, it would relieve his mind of a load of anxiety on her account; and he resolved to embrace every opportunity that occurred to strengthen the attachment he hoped the whole family felt for her.

Her ladyship had not so much merit in having made the proposal, as the goodness of Mr. Howard had ascribed to her. She had made the offer partly from a desire of obliging Sir Walter, who had recommended it to her, and partly from an impulse of compassion, which the grief of Louisa, and her interesting appearance, had inspired her with. But, after the first emotions of pity had subsided, she thought no more of it, or of her visitor. But the unremitting attention of Miss Stanley, who, Louisa found, had lost none of her vivacity and good humour, atoned for the want of it in her mother. Armida, Louisa observed with surprise and admiration, was grown as tall as herself, and ex-

tremely beautiful; but she had none of that sweet conciliating manner which so eminently distinguished her eldest sister: her salutation of Louisa was cold and constrained; she appeared to view her with an eye of jealousy. Louisa, unconscious of the reason, shrunk abashed from the piercing looks of her full dark eyes, and sought for consolation in the mild sympathizing ones of her sister.

"Ah!" thought she, "how much more desirable is a sweet temper than a beautiful face! with what superior satisfaction do I gaze on the plain face and ordinary features of Miss Stanley, than I do on that of her beautiful sister! Doubtless the beauty of the mind, as my lost friend has often repeated, is far preferable to that of the person or face. With how much pleasure have I even contemplated the coarse countenance of my nurse! It must have been because she has a tender

heart, and a sincere affection for me: it is sweetness of disposition, then, and affection, that give charms which are more engaging than beauty."

When Louisa saw Mr. Stanley, which was not till the dinner hour, she had recovered from the agitation her mind had been thrown into by the painful recollections which the first meeting her friends had occasioned. The alteration in both their persons, since they had last met, was a subject for mutual surprise. Louisa was then a mere girl: he could scarcely recognise now, in the elegantly formed young woman, the companion of his juvenile sports; but he seemed far from being inclined, by the admiration with which he viewed her, to retract the opinion he had formerly given of her beauty.

Walter Stanley, though four years older than Louisa, was, when she had last seen him, quite a lad; or at least, from his playful disposition, and being in the habit of

seeing him often, she had thought so: but now he was grown a tall, elegant, well-proportioned man. When she heard his name announced by his sister, saying he was returned from a long ride he had taken with his father, she sprang forward to meet him with the same easy familiarity she used to accost him when he returned from school: but when his person met her eyes, in confusion she cast them on the floor, while expressing the satisfaction she felt at meeting him.

"My dear Miss Fitzormond!" exclaimed he, "your reception of me, so different from what it used to be, after a long absence from home, makes me almost regret the alteration which time, no doubt, has made in my appearance, as well as in your own: gladly would I resume my boyish habit and figure, to insure that welcome I have so often anticipated with pleasure from you."

Louisa assured him she was never

more happy to see him than at the present moment: "Every branch of the Stanley family must be dear to me," said she, extending her hand towards him. "So circumscribed as my circle of friends are," she added, in a tremulous voice, "I should be prodigal indeed, if, by inattention or ingratitude, I committed any action to lessen the number."

"Cold and insensible must that heart be," rejoined Mr. Stanley, "that is not a friend to so much beauty and worth. My sisters," added he, "will, I hope, know how justly to appreciate the value of such a friend," respectfully raising her hand to his lips, before he resigned it, as he led her to a seat, near his mother.

Sir Walter, who was remarkably well-bred, and possessed a fund of wit and good humour, by talking on a variety of subjects new to Louisa, insensibly drew her from thinking of the past. Fearful of appearing ungrateful for his kind endea-

vours to divert her, she rallied her spirits, and attended to him with apparent complacency and pleasure.

"I was telling Walter, as we rode along," said the Baronet, after a pause, "how much he would be pleased to see the improvement a few years had made in the person of his little play-fellow and favourite; but I confess I am rather surprised myself; you are so much grown since we were at the hall last." Though, on reflection, so is Armida; but she was always taller than you for her age: but so true it is, the objects we see habitually do not remind us of the alteration time makes in us. Walter was so impatient to see you," added he, "that we stopped at the manor-house, in our way home, that he might have that pleasure.

"I hope," said Mr. Stanley, "Miss Fitzormond will believe my impatience was not dictated by curiosity alone: "I assure you," continued he, turning to

her, "I have a thousand times regretted the combination of circumstances that have occurred, to prevent me again enjoying the society I so early knew how to estimate, and which so amply contributed to my happiness: every tree, and every spot, at Mr. Howard's, as well as at the hall, have I recalled to my memory when far removed from all those I so tenderly love, and these never failed to awaken in me remembrances of juvenile felicity."

Louisa politely thanked him for having given her a place in his memory; but as he recalled to her mind the days he had passed at the manor house, her eyes filled with tears of regret that she, who had so often partaken of their amusements, and contributed to form their minds to enjoy the rational pleasures which the beauties of nature afford, was now no longer present to improve and instruct them.

Walter Stanley had always been a particular favourite of Mrs. Martha How-

ard's: she early discerned the seeds of genius in his young mind, and took great pains when he visited them, which was frequently, as he was attached to the whole family, to cultivate his dawning excellencies.

Seated with Louisa and him, beneath a large tree, on an eminence that commanded an extensive and sublime prospect, she would expatiate on the beauties of nature, and the omnipotence of him who had so wonderfully formed every thing to contribute to the pleasures and conveniences of man. Taught by her, they soon imbibed a love of virtue, and an enthusiastic admiration of every thing that was sublime in nature, or great and beautiful in the actions of eminent men. As they read the pages of history together, the young heart of Walter would pant to emulate some of the noble actions of the great and distinguished characters there recorded: while the soft blue eyes

of Louisa would glisten, through her tears, at the recitals of suffering mortality, or the barbarous policy of war, that had for ages desolated countries and destroyed domestic happiness, by depriving it of some of its dearest relatives.

Louisa passed a week at Stanley Hall with great satisfaction to herself, and pleasure to Mr. Howard, who saw the roses, that had for some time been banished from her cheeks, again revisit them. Though pressed by all the family, except Armida and Lady Stanley, to extend her visit, she preferred the pleasure of contributing to the comfort of Mr. Howard, who had not been for many years so long without female society, to the gratification of her own.

In the company of Walter Stanley and his elder sister, she partook of pleasure refined and grateful to her heart: the conversation of the former was replete with good sense and elegance: the grace-

fulness of his manner, the noble dignity of his sentiments, and the insinuation of his address, irresistibly gained the admiration of those who conversed with him, while the vivacity of Miss Stanley continually diverted them.

Louisa would have regretted deeply leaving such agreeable society, if she had not expected, from the short distance between the Hall and the Manor House, to have seen them very often. As it was, she parted from them without uneasiness: the consciousness of performing a duty imposed on her as much by inclination as gratitude, diffused a glow of satisfaction to her heart, far superior to the pleasure arising from self-gratification.

Shortly after her return to the parsonage, the family at the hall were augmented by the arrival of several visitors; Lady Stanley always finding it impossible to exist for any length of time without

some society beside those of her own family; therefore generally had her house full, during what she called her retirement.

The visitors at the hall now were, the Earl and Countess of Delville, their eldest son, Lord Belmour, a dissipated young man of fashion, who had been very much smitten with the blooming beauty of Armida Stanley, whom he thought the finest young woman he had ever seen, and declared to the Earl his father, who very much wished to see him married, that no woman but her could ever have power to shackle him with the trammels of matrimony; and entreated him to obtain the consent of Sir Walter as soon as possible, lest he should alter his mind.

The Earl of Delville, who knew the fickle disposition of his son, and was well aware that no time was to be lost,

immediately made application to Sir Walter, who readily gave his consent for Lord Belmour to address his daughter, provided she had no objection. He considered her too young himself; but that objection was quickly over-ruled by Lady Stanley, who was much elated at the idea of her favourite daughter forming so splendid an alliance.

Her Ladyship said it was absurd to think of making any objection to the character of the young man: the beauty of her daughter, she was convinced, would firmly attach him to her, and very probably might divert him from those destructive pursuits to which he was rather addicted, but not in a greater degree than most young men of fashion and spirit were. "But if she should fail in detaching him from those pursuits," continued her Ladyship, "I am sure Armida has too much spirit and sense to

make herself unhappy, when she has the prospect of being a Countess; a title already, and an equipage and appointments equal to the first nobility in the kingdom."

Sir Walter expressed his doubts of all those elegancies procuring the happiness he wished his child to obtain in marriage, but said he should not object to it, if Armida's wishes coincided with those of Lord Belmour: if they did not, the wealth and splendour even of royalty should not tempt him to force her inclination, in a point where her own happiness or misery was so much concerned.

Lady Stanley undertook to answer for the consent of her daughter, who, she said, could not be so blind to her own interest as to refuse such a noble offer.

Armida, as much attached to pomp and gaiety as Lady Stanley, accepted with pleasure the proposals of the Earl

in behalf of his son, whom she prepared to meet and receive as her future husband.

Her society, for a short time, had power to withdraw his attention from the fascinating charms of the gaming-table, the allurements of the beautiful heroines of the theatre and opera-house, and even to divert him from the supreme pleasure of beholding two of his fellow-creatures *scientifically* maim each other.

But this was not to be endured for any length of time: the dilatoriness of the lawyers in preparing the settlements quite wearied him; to shake off which, he agreed to join a party who were going to some fashionable races the same week the family of Sir Walter quitted London, when he promised to join them with the Earl and Countess, at Stanley Hall. It was proposed their marriage should take place as soon as the necessary arrangements were completed.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

To those already mentioned, were added his sister, Lady Adelina Belmour, a very amiable and accomplished girl, and a Miss Freeman, a confidential friend of the latter.

CHAP. IV.

Who hath not own'd, with rapture-smitten frame,
The pow'r of grace, the magic of a name?
There be, perhaps, who barren hearts avow,
Cold as the rocks on Torneo's hoary brow;
There be, whose loveless wisdom never fail'd,
In self-adoring pride securely mail'd;—
But triumph not, ye peace-enamour'd few!
Fire, nature, genius, never dwelt with you!
For you no fancy consecrates the scene
Where rapture utter'd vows, and wept between;
'Tis yours, unmov'd to sever and to meet;
No pledge is sacred, and no home is sweet!

PLEASURES OF HOPE.

LOUISA had heard of the arrival of the expected party at the hall the day before, and did not imagine any of the family would find time to call on her, so much engaged as they must necessarily be: she, therefore, accompanied by Robin, the favourite little dog of her deceased friend, set out to pay a visit to the

pensioners of the latter, now become hers, in the village; her late engagements having prevented her calling on any of them for some time. To some she communicated advice and consolation, to others assistance of a pecuniary nature, or what she conceived most conducive to their real comfort. By all, her kindness was felt with the utmost gratitude and thankfulness, and blessings implored on her head by the sick, the aged, and the infirm, to whom she was a common benefactress. But though impressed with the gratitude of these poor people, she always directed it to be paid more to Mr. Howard than to herself, as she only acted by his direction, now their friend as well as her own was gone to receive the reward of her benevolence.

She was returning home through the pleasure-ground that surrounded the house for some distance, when the barking of Robin gave her notice of the ap-

proach of strangers: in a few minutes she was met by the younger part of the party at the hall, and interrogated where she had hid herself for so long a time, as they had been hunting for her over all the grounds.

"Lord Belmour and his sister," exclaimed Armida Stanley, "are dying to be introduced to the rural deity of these shades; allow me, then, Miss Fitzormond, to be your priestess, and introduce those devout worshippers to your divinityship."

Louisa, hurt at the air of sarcasm in Armida's speech, answered with a degree of spirit unusual to her—

"Without having the slightest pretension to the title you have so wittily bestowed on me, I accept the honour you have done me by an introduction to Lord Belmour and Lady Adelina, with the gratitude of a mere mortal."

Blushing deeply, she gracefully re-

turned the compliments of the gay party, and entering into conversation with Lady Adelina and Walter Stanley, who were walking together, she very soon recovered from the confusion their sudden appearance had occasioned her. The rude stare of Lord Belmour had been particularly offensive to her; his person was undoubtedly handsome, and his appearance that of a man of fashion; but there was a certain indefinable something in his look and manner that was repugnant to her feelings: she recollected the advice of her maternal friend, against encouraging sudden prepossessions, and endeavoured to subdue the dislike she had conceived.

The mild graces of his sister were more consonant to her: she was several years older than Louisa, tall, and elegantly formed; her features were plain, but expressive of tenderness and good-nature: she appeared particularly pleased

with Louisa, and expressed the pleasure it would give her to be frequently favoured with her society, while she remained at Stanley Hall, which, she informed Louisa, would be till her brother's marriage with Armida had taken place; then they intended spending the remainder of the autumn at Delville Castle, in Cumberland.

Lord Belmour and Armida now called on them to take a ride, before they returned to the hall: "You, Stanley," cried his Lordship, "will drive Adelina, and Miss Fitzormond will suffer me to include her in my party in the barouch. By the bye," continued he, "Armida says she will not again mount the dickey; so as I drive, you will have no objection to take a seat with me: you drive of course, sometimes; so I can, as we go along, instruct you in a new method of turning a corner, and holding the whip, which is entirely my own invention, as

is the peculiar construction of the carriage: Armida admires it extremely; but I should like to hear your opinion also, for it strikes me that you have a great deal of taste."

Louisa thanked him for his good opinion of her, but assured him that he was quite deceived in the present instance, as she neither knew how to drive, or had any taste in the construction of carriages: those that were the safest, she said, she always considered the best.

"Oh! as to the safety," replied his Lordship, "no one can possibly be more so; I had it made on a principle that effectually prevents the possibility of its overturning. To be sure the booby of a coachmaker deviated from my plan, which occasioned it to be overset the first day; and one of the fellows that were in it, to make the experiment over rough ground, was thrown out, and had his leg broke, and another hurt considerably:

however, I paid the expense of the doctors, and supported their families till they got well; so I was the principal sufferer."

"Then you consider bruises and broken bones of little consequence," inquired Louisa, with astonishment depicted on her face, "if the sufferer has not the additional misery of knowing his family are expiring for want of that support which accident has deprived him of affording them?"

"Very little, indeed," returned his Lordship, not observing the horror her countenance betrayed at his want of feeling: "a few guineas compensate them amply for an accident of that sort. I always take care the poor devils have that satisfaction when they receive an injury in my service."

Armida commended the generosity of his Lordship in terms that appeared to convey satisfaction to his mind; while

Louisa, shocked and amazed, was totally silent: she could not commend where her reason so much disapproved, and she thought it needless for her to attempt combating with prejudice and an unfeeling heart.

"How grateful is praise," thought Louisa, "to the human heart; and how extraordinary that persons who are capable of enjoying it, do not endeavour to merit it! Even Lord Belmour, who, if he had the power of reflecting, must be conscious that he does not deserve it, yet evidently receives it with so much pleasure. Had I expressed sentiments similar to those of his Lordship, I should have considered that the praises bestowed by Armida implied reproaches. How great is the contrast between his Lordship and Walter Stanley!"

At this moment, Louisa saw him hand Lady Adelina into his curricle, and, bowing to the rest of the party, drive off.

She felt a sensation very much like regret cross her mind, and an involuntary sigh escaped her, as she for a moment followed them with her eyes.

Lord Belmour, who was attentively observing her at the moment, increased her confusion, by inquiring if she preferred a curricle, as an open carriage, to every other; or if it was the driver who had extorted that tender sigh from her fair bosom?

Louisa, who was scarcely able to define the nature of her emotion, after a momentary embarrassment, answered that neither had occasioned it; but the heat and the long walk she had taken had fatigued her: in consequence of which, she declined accompanying them in their ride.

Miss Stanley declared that she positively would not go without her, as they had promised to bring her to the hall with them, and Mr. Howard was to be

there also. "He, you know, rode over this morning," continued she, "and Sir Walter will of course detain him, as you are expected. So, no staying moping at home, when your company is so much desired by your friends."

Thus persuaded, Louisa ascended the carriage of Lord Belmour, who in vain tried to prevail on her to take the seat by him; but she declined it in favour of Miss Stanley, by whom it was preferred.

Seated with Armida and Miss Freeman, the companion and friend of Lady Adelina, little conversation passed: the former, offended at the attention Lord Belmour had paid Louisa, was sullen and sarcastic; and the latter, who was one of those very pliable dispositioned ladies, who always suit their temper to the humours and caprices of their superiors, very obligingly sat silent.

To Louisa, the ill-humour of Armida was no subject of surprise; as she

knew she often was so without cause, she did not regard it: but, from not being engaged in conversation, she sunk into a reverie respecting her feelings towards Walter Stanley. "He is," thought she, "infinitely engaging: his manners are so soft, yet so manly; and his sentiments so noble and generous: he is always affectionate to his sisters, and speaks to them in the kindest manner; but when he addresses me, his voice assumes a softer tone, which penetrates to my heart: had nature given me a brother, could I have loved him better than I do Walter Stanley? Ah! no. But surely I should have loved him very dearly: I am convinced I should; the interest I take in every thing in which he is concerned plainly shews me I love him tenderly; but it must be the affection of a sister I feel for him."

Thus artless and innocent, did she draw a veil over her heart, and, under

the idea of only cherishing an affection for a beloved and amiable brother, nourish the seeds of a rising passion.

When the carriage stopped at the hall, the person who had engaged so much of her thoughts presented himself to assist her to alight: blushing, she gave him her hand, which he found trembled in his: that, and her varying countenance, convinced him that she was ill.

"Dearest Miss Fitzormond!" exclaimed he, "you are certainly very ill, or something has distressed you: allow me to support you to the house."

"No, indeed!" interrupted she, (fearful her emotion should be observed,) "I am quite well, but rather oppressed with the heat: oblige me by not noticing it; the family will be alarmed—I am quite well."

"I will try to believe you," replied Mr. Stanley, "but I am apprehensive that you conceal your indisposition, from a

fear of giving others pain. Amiable Louisa! what would I not do to oblige you!"

Louisa's heart thanked him for this assertion, but her tongue refused to give utterance to the gratitude she felt.

The approach of the rest of the party interrupted any further conversation, to the great relief of Louisa, who found herself unable to support it with her accustomed cheerfulness: she, therefore, took the earliest opportunity of retiring with Miss Stanley to the dressing-room of the latter.

The conversation that passed between them, when in private, did not contribute to restore peace to her bosom.

Miss Stanley, who without reserve always communicated every event in the family, and every conjecture and idea of her own to Louisa, immediately began to inform her of a circumstance that she had discovered, which was that Lady

Adelina Belmour was violently in love with her brother Walter.

"But, my dear Louisa," exclaimed she, "you must not mention it for worlds! Miss Freeman, who is in her ladyship's confidence, told it me this morning, under the seal of secrecy; but as I told her that I had no secrets with you, she agreed to my telling you."

"She is infinitely obliging," returned Louisa; "but it is a secret that I would much rather not have known, for, by communicating it, she has forfeited her word to Lady Adelina: indeed, I should be inclined to doubt the assertion of a person who was guilty of such a breach of trust."

"And so should I," replied Miss Stanley, "in any other instance; but in the present I believe she is right, as I made the same observation myself before I had seen her half an hour with my brother."

"She appears very amiable," said Louisa.

"Oh yes!" replied Miss Stanley, "exceedingly so; and she is immensely rich: it would give me great pleasure to see her united to Walter: he thinks her amiable, but he does not admire her more than he does the Countess, her mother, who is so likewise: therefore there is not much chance of her ladyship's prepossession in his favour being returned. I know it would give Sir Walter and my mother much pleasure," she added, "if he was to marry her."

Louisa suppressed a sigh she felt rising at this declaration, and endeavoured to say, she hoped he would gratify their wishes; but the words died away in unintelligible accents.

Miss Stanley, observing her abstracted air and dejected countenance, imagined that she really was ill, and began to

blame herself for persuading her to come with them to the hall.

Louisa, happy that her friend did not suspect the cause of her dejection, alleged the indisposition she had complained of in the morning to be the cause of it, but said that she hoped to be better in a few minutes, as it was only a pain that attacked her head at intervals.

When Louisa descended to the drawing-room, Lady Stanley introduced her to the Countess of Delville, as the ward of Mr. Howard. The Countess received her very graciously, and appeared much pleased with her appearance: she very obligingly entered into conversation with her in the most affable manner. The sweetness of her voice, and a certain endearing modulation of it, while speaking to her, reminded Louisa strongly of her lamented friend; she felt naturally im-

pelled towards her, and secretly wished that she could obtain the friendship of such a being. "How happy," thought she, "is Lady Adelina, in being blessed with the affection of such a mother; and how strange that the conversation and manners of Lord Belmour should differ so widely from them both!"

"You remind me very much," said the Countess, addressing Louisa, whose features she had been attentively regarding; "you remind me very much of a dear friend of my youth, who has long been dead; you resemble her both in features and voice: you are rather taller, but in every other respect you are so much like her, that I could almost fancy the grave had given up its dead, without having impaired the beauty of its victim. As I now gaze on you, I could forget the lapse of time, and believe I was seated by the earliest companion and friend I ever had: your name too is the

same; but she never had a child, or I should be tempted to think you were her daughter."

The eyes of the Countess bore testimony to the strength of her affection for the deceased, and of the duration of her regret for her death, which she informed Louisa was sudden; but she had never been able to learn in what manner or where her life had terminated.

The tears of Louisa accompanied those of the Countess: "Amiable child!" said she, pressing Louisa's hand, "may you never have cause to shed more bitter tears than those which now flow in sympathy for the woes of others! Your mind now is pure and unsophisticated: carefully avoid every thought and action that may cast a stain on it, and never have any concealments with those who are entitled by nature and affection to your confidence. So shall you avoid the reproaches of your own heart, and the bitter tears

of remorse. The consciousness of acting right will support you in affliction, in pain, and in every trying moment of life. But once forfeit that peace of mind, by an action your reason condemns, and your life will be passed in misery: you cannot receive consolation from your heart, when misfortune assails you, for that tells you that you have incurred it, by not following the dictates of conscience, which never errs; and if you cannot find it in your own breast, it will be in vain to look for it any where else."

Louisa, kissing the hand she held, thanked her kind monitress for the lesson which she had condescended to give her, which, she energetically added, should be imprinted on her heart in indelible characters.

"I trust it will," said the Countess: "our conversation has turned on a grave subject; but youth ought to be serious sometimes: a few minutes spent in that

way is of more service than whole days passed in carelessness or folly. But go now," she added, "and join the young people. Adelina tells me that she already loves you; she is also a very good girl; I should rejoice to see you friends."

The affectionate heart of Louisa bounded with pleasure at the kindness of the Countess: she seemed to tread in air: the conversation in which she had been engaged had calmed the disquietude of her agitated spirits, and soothed her mind to perfect peace and composure.

In this happy frame of mind she met Walter Stanley, who congratulated her on her perfect restoration to health.—"Your countenance now tells me," said he, "that you are better than you were some hours back; that is evidence I must believe: but could I have had the same satisfaction when I last parted from you, it would have saved me much anxiety."

"You are too good," replied Louisa,

" to give yourself so much concern about me; but I am grateful for it, and hope I shall not again give my friends uneasiness, by exposing myself so imprudently to the heat of the sun."

The remainder of the day was passed by her in the most perfect tranquillity: the tender assiduities of Mr. Stanley were grateful to her heart; though she was unconscious that his idea occupied her mind in the slightest degree. She saw him converse with Lady Adelina, but it did not give her pain: his attentions to that lady were dictated by politeness only: she plainly perceived it, and this conviction was consolatory to her.

In the course of the evening, Miss Freeman made several attempts toward familiar conversation with Louisa; but the ill opinion she had conceived of that lady, induced her to meet those advances with coldness. " A person," thought she, " who can wantonly betray the con-

fidence of her friend, is one I by no means wish to have any intercourse with, farther than the common forms of politeness render indispensable."

By following the dictates of her ingenuous nature, that revolted from every thing which bore the semblance of perfidy and ingratitude, Louisa innocently made an enemy of Miss Freeman, whose nature was malignant and revengeful, though she had the art to conceal those detestable qualities under an appearance of candour and simplicity.

To those whom Providence had placed in a subordinate situation, Miss Freeman was haughty and overbearing; but to her superiors she was pliable, gentle, and submissive. She was the daughter of a country gentleman, whom the Countess had long known and esteemed: by unavoidable misfortunes, he had been reduced from affluence to almost total want, against which he had long struggled with

manly fortitude, but in the end had sunk under it. Anxiety for this his only child preyed on his mind, and deprived him of his senses. The humanity of the Countess of Delville supported him till he was released from the woes of mortality; but her kindness did not cease when the object of it was no more; she still extended it to his orphan daughter (then about sixteen years of age), whom she took home to her house, and made the companion of her only daughter, who was nearly of the same age. Miss Freeman had received the rudiments of a genteel education at a boarding-school, but the misfortunes of her father had prevented her from obtaining more than a superficial knowledge of any branch of learning. Her mind was wholly uncultivated: no pains had been taken to suppress the seeds of envy, malice, and ill-nature, to which she was naturally prone; nor had she been so fortunate as to obtain a

friend who would warn her of the danger of giving the reins to those destructive passions, or describe to her the beauty of virtue, and the peace of mind which it bestows on its possessor.

She was endowed by nature with great quickness of comprehension, and an understanding capable of the most extended improvement; but, from taking a wrong bias, what might have produced the most exalted virtues, displayed only meanness, duplicity, and cunning: to promote her own interest, she could assume the garb of meekness, tenderness, and every virtue that was actually a stranger to her bosom. Lady Adelina, whose soul was the seat of virtue and goodness, had not the remotest idea of the real character of Miss Freeman; she saw her an orphan, and friendless, deserted by every one except the Countess and herself: her assumed virtues passed current with her; she took pains

to improve her in every thing useful and ornamental; she studied to render the fetters of dependance light and easy; and both the Countess and herself treated her in every respect as a friend and companion.

Yet, for all these benefits she felt no gratitude, though she continually professed it: to advance her interest, or gratify her resentment, she would have made no scruple to sacrifice both those amiable women, who had rescued her from want.

This being the disposition of the lady whom Louisa had offended by treating her with indifference, it is natural to suppose that she would not suffer it to pass with impunity. In the bitterness of offended pride, she wished for revenge, and secretly hoped that she should have an opportunity of gratifying it at some future time.

The day after their return from the hall, Mr. Howard was seized with an indisposition that assumed a very serious appearance. Louisa, much alarmed, would not be again persuaded to quit him; but in the utmost anxiety awaited the crisis of his complaint, which, to her inexpressible satisfaction, was favourable. In about a week he was able to leave the house, and walk some distance: his convalescence was no sooner announced, than she was entreated to join the party at the hall, as every arrangement was completed for the marriage of Lord Belmour with Armida Stanley; and it was the wish of the whole family that she should be present on the occasion. By the desire of Sir Walter, Mr. Howard was to perform the ceremony, which accordingly took place in a few days.

The new-married couple sat off, at-

tended by Miss Stanley, to a superb house, that had been presented to his lordship, on his marriage, by the Earl of Delville, who was much gratified with his son's choice.

The satisfaction of all parties seemed complete: Lady Stanley was elated with the splendour of her daughter's nuptials; and Sir Walter, satisfied that no authority had been exerted to compel her to accept his lordship as a husband, was rejoiced that it had contributed to form the happiness of her ladyship.

CHAP. V.

But who the melodies of morn can tell?
The wild brook bubbling down the mountain's side;
The lowing herd; the sheepfold's simple bell;
The pipe of early shepherd dim descried
In the low valley; echoing far and wide,
The clamorous horn along the cliffs above;
The hollow murmur of the ocean tide;
The hum of bees; the linnet's lay of love;
And the full choir that wakes the universal grove.
BEATTIE.

THE departure of the Earl of Delville's family shortly succeeded that of Lord Belmour and his bride. Louisa extremely regretted the company of Lady Adelina, for whom she felt the sincerest attachment. During the illness of Mr. Howard, she had several times, accompanied by Miss Stanley, paid her a visit at the Manor House: her conversation was so mild and endearing, so free from

every vestige of ill-nature, or narrow-minded pride, that she stole irresistibly on the affections. Louisa felt her esteem every day increasing: "Walter Stanley," thought she, "must love so much goodness and virtue; he would not, I am convinced, sacrifice his affections for the mere adventitious circumstance of riches and title: the noble independence of his character forbids me to entertain an idea so injurious to him. But when those advantages are rendered truly valuable by the possessor being blessed with every amiable quality that adorns human nature, and gives additional splendour to the lustre of a noble name, he cannot surely avoid returning the affection of such a woman!"

Miss Stanley had confirmed the intelligence obtained from Miss Freeman, respecting the affection of Lady Adelina for her brother: but at the same time she had informed Louisa, that she much

feared the attachment was not reciprocal; indeed her brother had declared to Sir Walter (who had recommended his cultivating her ladyship's good opinion), that he was convinced he could never entertain a warmer sentiment for Lady Adelina than he did at present: he said, he respected her many amiable qualities, and esteemed the goodness of her heart; but he could never consider her in any other light than as a friend, or feel for her any other sentiment than that which the relationship now existing between the two families warranted.

"This determination of Walter's," continued Miss Stanley, when informing Louisa of it, "has given Sir Walter great uneasiness, as, I am sorry to say, the expensive manner in which the family have lived has much decreased the opulence of it. Sir Walter informed my brother of this circumstance, to induce him to avail himself of the predilection

of Lady Adelina, who, to great riches, adds so many estimable qualities, which would no doubt insure him permanent happiness."

The Countess of Delville had continued to treat Louisa with the same degree of kindness and attention that she had at first honoured her with. When taking leave of her, the day before they quitted the hall, she expressed the regret she felt at being so soon separated, in terms that impressed Louisa with the liveliest gratitude.

"My dear Miss Fitzormond," said the Countess, "if you should ever need the advice or assistance of a friend, make no scruple of applying to me. I feel much interested for you, more even than circumstances at present warrant: you are now, it is true, protected by the most benevolent and affectionate of men; but as every thing, my dear Louisa, is mutable and uncertain, you may stand

in need of the direction of a person more capable of affording it than you may possibly have in such an emergency. Forget not the invitation I now give you."

Louisa wept the thanks she was unable to utter: the tenour of the Countess's speech, she imagined, foreboded some evil to her, though of what nature she could not comprehend. "No evil," thought she, "can assail me, to render it necessary that I should avail myself of her generous offer, but the death of my revered, beloved Mr. Howard; and he is so much recovered, that I may reasonably hope to be long blessed with his protecting care and fatherly advice: but should misfortune reach me, where only I think I could not sustain it with fortitude, I should indeed need the advice and support of a friend so capable of bestowing it."

The Countess was affected with the silent eloquence of her tears, which

spoke more forcibly the gratitude she felt, than words could have done.

Tenderly embracing her, she led her thoughts to a more cheerful subject. She spoke of the attachment of Lady Adelina for her, and of the pleasure it would afford them to meet at some future time.

"Lady Stanley," continued the Countess, "tells me that she purposes asking Mr. Howard to permit you to accompany her to town when she quits Stanley Hall: if he does, I shall no doubt have the pleasure of meeting you; but if not, some other event will perhaps afford us that pleasure. On every occasion, my dear girl, be guided by the counsel of your respected friend, and hold fast the integrity you are so much indebted to him for having instructed you, by his example, to support; it has made me love you, and it will always gain you the esteem of the wise and good."

Louisa promised obedience to her advice, which she said she would implicitly follow on all occasions, and not without tears did the Countess take leave of her.

The solitude of the hall, after the departure of her visitors, and the loss of her daughter's society, soon became irksome to Lady Stanley; accustomed from the time of her marriage to live always in a crowd, retirement and quiet were insupportably tedious to her.

She therefore soon had her house again the scene of festivity and pleasure. Louisa, now Miss Stanley was gone, seldom made more than a transient visit: those ladies she met there were too much like Lady Stanley to afford her much pleasure in their society; and her beauty and simplicity of manners were considered by them as subjects, the one of envy, the other of contempt.

Mr. Stanley, who still continued at

the hall, for the ostensible purpose of shooting, was the only person, except Sir Walter, who paid her any attention: the latter, Mr. Howard had observed, as well as herself, was generally engaged at billiards, or some other game.

The advice of the Countess, and the communications of Miss Stanley, relative to the wishes of her family, had enabled Louisa to perceive the real state of her feelings towards Walter Stanley; and she was soon convinced, on an impartial scrutiny, that her mind was too much impressed with his merits to allow her to see him united to another, without giving her pain. "If I only loved him with the affection of a sister," she would say, "should I not rejoice to see him married to so amiable a person as Lady Adelina? But I cannot think of it without sickening at the very idea. Yes—it is in vain to conceal it from

myself that I love him: but I am certain it is with that purity which would induce me to prefer his happiness to my own.

"He does not love Lady Adelina! How unfortunate is she! Neither have I any reason to suppose that he loves me: let me then, while I have power to do it, erase this passion from my too susceptible heart. Indeed, what have I to expect by encouraging it? Must I not inevitably heap up misfortunes on myself? Shall I not also cloud the latter days of my dearest friend with unavailing sorrow and regret? For, even supposing that I was beloved by Walter Stanley, what have I to bring to his arms but poverty? Ah! let me conquer this weakness, and not involve in misery those who are so dear to me."

In this heroic resolution she had the courage to persevere: she carefully

avoided the society of him who had excited those tender emotions which had given her so much uneasiness, and which, she feared, would occasion her so many more, if not timely suppressed. When he visited at the Manor House, she would only see him when in the presence of Mr. Howard, and even then avoided every discussion likely to excite her admiration, by calling forth the noble sentiments of Mr. Stanley, whose tongue possessed the magic power of conviction, and whose eloquence, she feared, would lead her to forget her resolution, and compel her to yield her heart up entirely to the fascinating witcheries of a first love.

This resolution, it is true, cost her a severe struggle; but she called in the aid of virtue and religion to support her, and she soon found the comfort arising from a virtuous resolution firmly adhered to in the peaceful serenity of her bosom,

which had been before torn with conflicting passions.

The behaviour of Mr. Stanley towards Louisa was tender and respectful; but his looks frequently seemed to reproach her for so studiously avoiding him. His impatient manner, whenever she quitted him, evidently betrayed the situation of his heart, which was not less agitated than her own; yet, as he had never, in direct terms, given her reason to suppose that he felt for her more than the common affection which their acquaintance from childhood naturally authorised, she would not allow herself to think that he entertained any warmer sentiments for her: but a trifling incident discovered to Louisa the real state of his heart, and the fervency of the passion with which she had inspired him.

One morning Mr. Stanley having called at the parsonage, on his return from shooting, Mr. Howard inquired what

sport he had had? "Why," returned he, "what I suppose a true sportsman would call very little; but I don't go out so much to make war with the birds, and fright them from their peaceful retreats, as I do to enjoy the beauties of a mild autumnal morning; to see the newly-risen sun enlivening with his cheering influence all animated nature; to listen to the lowing of the cattle in the pastures, and the cheerful voice of the peasant, whistling or singing, as he goes to his daily labour to gain a sustenance for his family, who look to him for support. This imparts a pleasure to my heart superior to any that I have ever felt in partaking the most fashionable amusements, or mixing in the most brilliant societies; where nature is generally sacrificed to art, and where scandal, envy, and detraction, assume the name of wit and elegance.

"This morning was particularly adapted to call forth the admiration of a lover of the sublime and beautiful works of nature: the rich scenery, over a great extent of country, was, in some parts, gilded with the brilliant rays of the sun, which rose in majestic splendour, and in others cast into a rich mellow shade, the beauty of which was increased by the contrasted colours of the trees and shrubs, some shining like burnished gold, others tinged with a blushing red, or sober brown, and some still flourishing in the blooming livery of spring.

"Though unable to copy the lively tints of Nature's pencil, yet I attempted to sketch the picturesque landscape on one side of me. As you," continued he, turning to Louisa, "are a proficient in the mimic art, you will perhaps think my attempt to copy nature but meanly

executed: the scene which I have endeavoured to imitate was worthy of your superior hand."

Searching among several loose papers which he took from his pocket, he presented the drawing to Louisa, who spoke of it, as did Mr. Howard, with the admiration it justly merited.

Their conversation turning on drawing and painting, at the desire of Mr. Howard, Louisa produced her portfolio for the inspection of Mr. Stanley, who, much delighted with some of her performances, amused himself by looking over them, for a considerable time.

When he took his leave, and Louisa was returning her drawings to their place, she perceived a paper which she imagined did not belong to her, with several of her own that had fallen on the floor.

Taking it up to examine it, she found

it contained verses written with a pencil, in Mr. Stanley's hand-writing.

"Oh! Oh!" exclaimed she, "then Stanley has more resources than one to make his mornings pass pleasantly; I should like to know if his poetry is as elegant as his drawing. But with such a genius as he possesses," added she, with a sigh, "no doubt it is. The muse that inspires him must excuse my gratifying the curiosity I feel to know how he employs it." After a momentary hesitation, during which she was debating whether she should return the paper unread or not, curiosity got the better of this prudent suggestion.

To Louisa.

O lovely maid! thy look is cold;
Cold are the glances of thine eye:
Is it Louisa I behold
My sorrows slight, my presence fly?

Yet could my warmest pray'rs avail,
Ev'ry bliss on earth were thine:
To bid no griefs thy heart assail,
Would be the pride, the joy of mine.

Then only breathe one pray'r for me,
That wheresoe'er remote I go,
The heart that would have died for thee,
May meet thro' life no other woe!

Louisa, extremely agitated, folded up the paper with a deep sigh. "Then he really loves me," whispered she—"transporting thought! But his eyes have told me so a thousand times: how then could he be so blind as not to see by mine that he is equally beloved? Alas! did he know the struggles that heart, which he accuses of coldness and insensibility, has sustained, he would cease to call it cruel: but dear as he is to me, he must never know it. It is for thy benefit, dearest friend, that I must afflict myself and thee."

Louisa, on first finding the paper, which had convinced her beyond a doubt that she was warmly beloved, imagined it might contain an address to the morning, or some such poetical effusion as would allow of her returning it again to him; but now she could not possibly think of doing it: she resolved, therefore, to conceal it, or perhaps destroy it. But this last resolution she could not prevail on herself to put in practice: and where is the female, who, loving tenderly as she did, and only just assured that the object of her affection felt an equal return of passion, could have had the prudence to act differently?

It is true, that by treasuring up this proof of his regard whom she loved, she was cherishing the passion she had before been trying to subdue: but the sophistry of love would not

suffer her to see it in that light. "There can be no harm," said she, "in retaining this paper, if it is not inquired for: I surely deserve this little indulgence, for the pain I have voluntarily endured, to conceal the affection I bear to the writer. Duty, and the desire I feel to advance his welfare in preference to my own present happiness, still demand that I should continue to conceal it; but neither duty nor generosity demands more." From that time, this precious paper was carefully deposited were she could readily have access to it: frequently, when lamenting the neccssity there was for her to tear his image from her heart, or only think of him as in the days of childhood, she would find herself bathing it with her tears, and though every letter was engraven on her heart, still tracing the characters with the most minute attention.

In the mean time Walter Stanley, hav-

ing missed the paper, was most anxiously solicitous to regain it: he could not bear to think that the declaration it contained of love for Louisa, should be prophaned by vulgar, or careless eyes. But vain were all his endeavours to find it, and it never once occurred to him that she had got it. Could he have known how highly it was prized by her, it would have solaced him for all the sufferings he was daily condemned to feel, from her apparent coldness, as he imagined, towards him. Indeed, the discovery which it made of the real state of his heart, thus gratifying to Louisa, did not make her relax any of the reserve she had imposed on herself to maintain; but rather tended to render her more than usually so; as her delicacy was alarmed, lest he should suspect that she was in possession of his secret, and willing to make the first advances.

Not long after this event, as she was sitting with Mr. Howard, the latter re-

ceived a note from Sir Walter, requesting his immediate presence at the hall. It appeared written in haste, and agitation. Mr. Howard presented it to Louisa, to let her see the reason of his leaving her, and ordering his horse, prepared immediately to attend the summons.

Louisa, much surprised, wearied herself with conjectures as to the cause: her mind, constantly dwelling on the idea of her lover, could suggest no other reason, but that something had happened to him. The longer she thought of it, the more strongly was she impressed with the certainty, that some fatal accident had taken place, of which she, perhaps, was the cause.

"Oh! why," cried she, "was I not permitted to go with Mr. Howard? Lady Stanley, unaccustomed to scenes of distress, will never have fortitude to sustain the sight of her beloved son suffering under misfortune; she will sink under it;

and Walter, whom I would willingly die to save, will be left to the care of hirelings, unsoothed by the voice of affection, and unregarded by the tender eye of pity; in his last moments, too, perhaps, he will accuse me of indifference to his fate, and cruelty, to which my heart is a stranger."

She continued in this state of painful suspense till the return of Mr. Howard, which was not for several hours. The instant she saw him approach, she flew towards him in breathless expectation of having her fears confirmed. "Tell me, my dear Sir!" she hastily exclaimed, "what has happened!" "Is Walter Stanley," she would have said, but shame prevented her giving her thought utterance, "is Lady Stanley, and all the family safe?"

"They are all perfectly safe, my dear child," said Mr. Howard. "An unpleasant circumstance compelled Sir Walter to send for me, that I might assist him with

my advice; but every thing is now settled, and Sir Walter and his son restored in some measure to that tranquillity, which the event I allude to so rudely interrupted. Lady Stanley knows nothing of what has happened; therefore, let me entreat you, my dear Louisa, not to notice it, if you should see her Ladyship.

"I am not able to enter into a detail of the business at present; when I feel myself more equal to the task, I will inform you of something it is necessary, I think, you should know."

Mr. Howard now wished Louisa a good night, and dismissed her to her chamber with more than his usual tenderness. Louisa fancied she saw a tear trembling in his eye as he parted from her, and this idea made her own flow profusely.

The chamber she occupied was the same that had been allotted to her father, the

only night that he passed at Mr. Howard's; it was therefore endeared to her from that circumstance. Frequently, when she retired to rest, she found pleasure in walking carefully over every part of it. "Here," she would say, "my father once stood! Here he shed bitter tears of anguish, at the hour of my birth; tears, no succeeding events ever tended to wipe away. From that fatal night, misfortune marked him for her own; he saw the wife he adored snatched from him by the hand of death; and the child, so tenderly bequeathed to him by her, destined never after to receive his parental embrace, or to hear himself hailed by the endearing name of father. In a foreign land, far removed from every object dear to his heart, amid the tumults of war, his days were closed, and perhaps his cold remains denied the rites of burial, or at best, only—

"By strangers honour'd, and by strangers mourn'd!"

Yet amidst all his afflictions, he had the consolation of knowing that his child was protected by beings so good and amiable, that they would supply his place to her: this must have been a soothing recollection; and his spirit, which I delight to believe hovers over me, no doubt blesses them for it: in this room, I feel he is near me; that he nightly watches my repose, and guards me from evil. If I retire here oppressed with grief, and think of him, my mind is calmed, and soothed to peace; and if elated by the giddy dreams of youthful vanity, it is corrected, and subdued to pensive reflection, or cheerful gratitude. Yet this little space contains the only spot in the wide extent of creation, in which I can trace, even in imagination, the footsteps of a single relative."

On quitting Mr. Howard this evening, she felt a presentiment of approaching evil: the solitude of her chamber did not

impart that serenity to her agitated breast which it had on other occasions been wont to do. Restless and uneasy, she paced to and fro the room, longing for, yet dreading, the approach of morning, when she hoped to have her fears relieved by the promised explanation.

The night was uncommonly beautiful, but it did not sooth the tumult of her mind. She had extinguished her light, and thrown open the window, to admit the air, as she felt oppressed with heat. Suddenly she imagined she heard a foot-step on the gravel beneath; her heart palpitated with terror—it was late, and the domestics had long retired to rest—who could it be? Robbers had never dared to invade the respected mansion of Mr. Howard. Yet they might be tempted to commit such an outrage. And if so, "Heaven," said she, "has appointed me to frustrate their wicked intentions by timely alarming the family."

She listened attentively, to hear the steps repeated, but no sounds met her ear, except the distant tinkling of the folds; and the hollow voice of the solitary bird of night.

Supposing she had been deceived, she was retiring from the window, when she plainly discovered the figure of a man crossing the lawn. Terror now gave way to surprise, for the person, whoever he was, bore no hostile appearance; his arms were crossed on his breast, and his head bent towards the ground. Louisa was fixed, as by enchantment, to the window, with her eyes strained to catch another glance of his person, which she fancied was familiar to her, but which the shade of some large trees concealed from her anxious view. However, she was not long kept in suspense, for the figure, advancing again towards the house, shewed her distinctly the form

and features of Walter Stanley: for a moment he raised his eyes to her window, and softly pronouncing a tender adieu, in which she distinguished her own name, he turned quickly away, and was lost to her in the surrounding gloom.

By an almost involuntary impulse she extended her arms towards him, but before she could articulate his name, he was beyond the reach of her voice.

She was convinced he had not seen her, for that part of the house where she stood was cast into shade, by the moon gradually sinking on the other side.

For some time she continued at the window, fondly hoping he would return, but all continuing sadly silent, she closed it, and retired, to endeavour to obtain that repose which her wearied spirits so much needed. But she had now a fresh subject for conjecture; why Walter Stanley should at that hour be wandering about

the abode which contained her? For that she was the occasion of his nocturnal visit, she had no doubt.

the necessity there is for you to persevere in such generous intentions, you will most readily continue to do so, and thereby obtain the approbation of your own heart, and retain the affection of all your friends. It is not, believe me, my dear child, the gratification of our wishes, however reasonable and just they may appear, that always constitutes our happiness; very far from it; that which we often imagine, in the warmth of youth, would complete our earthly felicity, not unfrequently, if obtained, causes our greatest misery for the remainder of our lives. Self-denial is a virtue we are commanded to practise, and it seldom fails to bring that peace to the heart, which a contrary conduct would not bestow."

Louisa, who had believed her secret anxiety was unobserved by every one, found herself confused and dismayed that Mr. Howard should be so well acquainted with the nature of her feelings: she

as it had not been expected for some weeks.

"It was not," said Mr. Howard; "but some family concerns of importance have taken him to London, and I think it probable he will not return hither at least for some months."

Louisa felt her colour vary: she tried to speak with indifference on the subject, but found herself not equal to the effort.

Mr. Howard, who observed her emotion, tenderly took her hand: "My dear Louisa," said he, in a tone of sympathy, "I have not been an inattentive observer of your conduct for some time past: I applaud the noble efforts you have made to conquer an attachment, which the merit of its object reasonably justifies you in having conceived; but which circumstances no longer allow you to continue.

"Acting as you have done, solely impelled by the dictates of your own mind, I need not fear but that, when you know

ous confession, and recommended her to adhere to the determination she had formed, as the most likely method for her to regain her entire peace of mind.

"When I went yesterday to the hall," continued Mr. Howard, "I found Sir Walter and his son in the utmost consternation, in consequence of the former having been arrested for a much larger sum than he could at present possibly command.

"His anxiety lest Lady Stanley should be made acquainted with the circumstance, and occasion her pain, was greater than what he felt on his own account.

"He informed me his estates were so deeply mortgaged, that it was almost impossible to raise any more money on them. Her Ladyship's jointure was still untouched, and not for worlds would he suffer it to be injured: he relied, he said, entirely on the affection of his son to relieve him from inevitable destruction,

which it was in his power to do, by availing himself of the partiality of Lady Adelina Belmour.

"I had hoped," continued Sir Walter, "I should have been spared this painful task. But since I last spoke to him on the subject, I have involved myself in a debt which must be paid, as it is a debt of honour. I played and lost: hoping to retrieve my good fortune, I staked double: the same ill luck pursued me; nor did it cease till the debt first incurred was increased to an immense amount: I dare not say to how much, or my brain will madden. But no matter, it must be paid. There is only one way left to save the father's honour, (nay, even his life, for I cannot survive the loss of the former) and the mother's happiness. This, my son," said he, turning to Walter, "you can do; the immense fortune of Lady Adelina will rescue your family from ruin; it will restore your father to

happiness, and it will not injure the generous woman, who will enable you to preserve the honour of a house that never yet knew shame, as, by paying off the mortgage, and acting with more prudence in future, I should in a few years be able to repay you."

"But I have wandered from the direct point," said Mr. Howard. "Sir Walter's principal reason for sending for me, was to adjust matters with the persons sent to take him into custody, for the security of a debt which ought to have been paid some time back. This I was fortunate enough to effect; my bail was accepted, and Sir Walter's person left at liberty; but, I fear, only to a temporary state of liberty; his imprudence having made it probable that he will again very shortly be exposed to the same inconvenience, unless some plan is formed to extricate him from his embarrassments.

"Could Walter Stanley consent to submit his inclinations to his father's directions, this might be done; as Lady Adelina has a fortune independant of the Earl her father; but, highly as he estimates the honour of his family, and loves his father, I can hardly be brought to think he will.

"Indeed, the thoughtless extravagance of Lady Stanley, and the no less culpable indulgence of Sir Walter in permitting it, makes me afraid to add my persuasions to his, to prevail on his son to do it, as I much fear their imprudence will not cease with their present difficulties; for Sir Walter, from habit as well as from affection, can refuse his lady nothing. Neither do I think she would have strength of mind to give up the idle dissipations of the world, or meet the contumelious neglect of the society to which she has been accustomed.

"In that case, the assistance they would

receive from Lady Adelina's fortune would not afford permanent relief, and their son would have the mortification of knowing he had sacrificed his happiness to little purpose.

"Sir Walter's appeal to his son, and the firm reliance he seemed to have on his filial affection, most sensibly affected him. But it did not succeed in obtaining his consent: he assured his father that he would with cheerfulness give up his title to the estates, and consent to any arrangements he thought proper to make, to afford him present ease; but that he abhorred the idea of offering his hand, where his heart could not accompany it, more particularly, as the declared purpose was to get possession of the lady's fortune.

"He allowed the merits of Lady Adelina, which his father urged as an inducement for his compliance; but declared that it rendered him still less inclined to

offer her so poor an equivalent as his person would be, without either an adequate fortune, or what, to a woman of delicacy, was of infinitely greater value—a heart devoted only to her. It was in vain that his father repeatedly assured him Lady Adelina's happiness depended on him; that she would be satisfied with his esteem and friendship alone; and that her many amiable qualities would in time create an interest in his heart, and make her dear to him: he remained inexorably fixed in his first determination. At length, when he found no objections he could make would satisfy his father, he declared that his affections were bestowed on an object so estimable, that nothing but a knowledge of her unworthiness could have power to make him ever think of uniting his fate to any other woman. That his affection for this amiable being had grown with him from childhood; that it had been his

heart's constant employ to attach his future happiness to an union with her, and that it was easier for him to resign his life than the hope of one day obtaining her hand. He confessed that he had not declared his affection to the beloved object, as he had been withheld partly by fear that she felt not the same sentiments for him, and partly from a dread of not obtaining his father's approbation.

"Sir Walter, who really loves his son, and, but for the derangement of his affairs, would, I am convinced, gladly contribute every thing in his power to promote his wishes, was inexpressibly grieved at this obstacle, which, from the stability of the young man's disposition, he began to fear, was insuperable. In bitter terms he lamented his own folly, which had made it necessary for him to inflict pain on a person so dear as an only son so deserving must be to him.

"Mr. Stanley, unable to endure his fa-

ther's self-reproaches, hastily quitted the room. Sir Walter then entreated me to use the influence I possessed over his son, to prevail on him to consent to his proposals. 'I will deal very candidly with you,' said he, 'and expect the same from you towards me in return. From what my son has said, I suspect that Miss Fitzormond is the female who has made so indelible an impression on his heart. I am not surprised at the circumstance, and had not my estates been so near ruin, I would have given my consent to their union, and with pride have acknowledged her for a daughter. But as it is, justice to all parties requires that I should withhold it, and adhere to my first resolution; which will be attended with such incalculable advantages to himself and his whole family. It is now absolutely necessary that he should marry a woman of fortune to support its re-

spectability. I am convinced your affection for the child of your adoption is too great to allow you to think of uniting her to a man of ruined fortune; I therefore the more readily hope that you will join me in endeavouring to convince them of the necessity there is that they should no longer encourage hopes that cannot be realised. And should my son be rash enough now to declare his passion, and solicit a return, I intreat you to represent to Louisa the imprudence she would be guilty of in doing so, as it would expose him infallibly to my resentment and just displeasure. Tell her also that I have so high an opinion of her feelings and good sense, that I expect it from her generosity.'

"I acknowledged to Sir Walter that my opinion coincided with his, and that I would state every circumstance to you that had occurred, and doubted not but

that you would act so as to justify the favourable opinion he had done you the honour to entertain, both to oblige him, and support the dignity that was consistent with your birth and character.

" Sir Walter was satisfied, and his son coming in, he again implored him to think seriously of the state of his affairs, and not let a romantic attachment make him blind to his own interest and his family's welfare. He begged that at all events he would take time to consider of it, if he did not wish to drive a father, who tenderly loved him, to desperation.

" The agony of both father and son may be more easily conceived than described: I never witnessed a more distressing scene. The father grieved to urge what he considered of such importance, and the son no less distressed that

he could not acquiesce with his father's wishes; yet firm in his resolution not to promise what he felt assured he could not perform.

"It was at last settled that Mr. Stanley should attend his father to London, for the purpose of making arrangements to liquidate the debts of the latter, who will return here again very shortly," continued Mr. Howard, "but will not permit his son to return with him, hoping, as I imagine, that absence will weaken his attachment, and render him less averse to gratify his wishes."

Mr. Howard, having concluded, arose, and tenderly embracing Louisa, recommended her to pursue her usual employments and amusements with diligence; and, above all, to implore the assistance of God to endue her mind with strength to conquer an attachment which, if encouraged under such circumstances as

he had related, would ultimately be attended with misery. Without noticing her emotion, he then hastily retired, to conceal his own.

CHAP. VII.

O partner of my infant griefs and joys!
Big with the scenes now past, my heart o'erflows;
Bids each endearment, fair as once, to rise,
And dwells luxurious on her melting woes.

Oft with the rising sun, when life was new,
Along the woodland have I roam'd with thee;
Oft by the moon have brush'd the ev'ning dew,
When all was fearless innocence and glee.

MICKLE.

WHEN Louisa found herself alone, she freely yielded to the sorrow that oppressed her heart, which the presence of Mr. Howard had restrained her from indulging before. Having wept for some time, she felt the weight that had pressed on her breast, so as nearly to occasion suffocation, considerably relieved. "Then our fate is inevitably decided,"

said she; "Sir Walter's imprudence has ruined his family, and his amiable son must be sacrificed to atone for his folly. He loves me too, with a passion pure and disinterested as my own for him; yet I must, by his cruel father's command, resign him: I must not even let him know that he has not bestowed the valuable treasure of such a heart as his on a being insensible of its value: yet, were he to know it, his distress would only be augmented; for now we can never be any thing more to each other than strangers. Oh! that I was still ignorant of his love! how much easier I should find it to regain my lost peace of mind!"

She, however, somewhat consoled herself that she had not been heard by her lover, when he visited her window the night before. "It was surely Providence," said she, "that restrained my tongue till it was too late for him to hear

me, or he would have had the additional pain of knowing we were mutually unhappy. Enable me, Oh my God!" said she, raising her hands and eyes to heaven, "enable me to bear this trial with fortitude; support my weakness, and forgive my grief."

Thus did poor Louisa implore divine aid, in order to strengthen her mind with sufficient resolution to overcome a passion which she had imperceptibly suffered to grow on her, at a time when she little thought what would be its fatal consequence.

Mr. Howard's grief was not less acute than Louisa's; it had been the first wish of his heart, from the time Walter Stanley's opening virtues convinced him of the goodness of his heart, to see him united to his orphan charge. Both himself and his late sister had early discovered a strong similarity in their dispositions: their studies, their pleasures, and

their antipathies, were the same. Louisa, though unfortunately deprived of the protection of her relative, was known by those kind friends to be as well born as Walter Stanley: the superiority of her understanding, the beauty of her person, and many amiable qualities of her heart, they very justly thought would compensate for a want of fortune equal to her birth; and at the time they first projected the union of their two favourites, they did not think that she would be wholly destitute of that. Sir Walter Stanley, they knew, was a man of such liberal principles, and so fond of his son, that he would not object to a proposal which was so essential to his happiness.

But though it was the wish of Mr. Howard and his sister to see them sensible of each other's merits, and irrevocably united, they did not attempt to influence their choice, or in the slightest manner

intimate to Louisa, that such a thought had ever been entertained by them.

The loss of Mrs. Martha's whole fortune considerably depressed her expectations, but not those of her brother; he had cherished the idea with fondness, and could not so readily resign it.

When Walter returned from college, all that the fondest parent could desire for the husband of a beloved daughter, Mr. Howard became more than ever solicitous that he and Louisa should form an attachment for each other: but the nature of his solicitude was changed, when he learned from Miss Stanley, shortly after the arrival of Lady Adelina Belmour at the hall, that Sir Walter wished his son to make choice of that lady for a wife. Mr. Howard then began to tremble for the peace of Louisa: he had too high a sense of honour to connive at an intimacy that would be repugnant to Sir Walter, and which he might be sup-

posed capable of promoting from interested views.

It was not long before his fears were verified: he discovered the state of the young people's hearts, and that they were fondly devoted to each other, though each was ignorant of the other's attachment: but he at the same time also learned that Sir Walter was resolved his son should marry another. He then lamented the folly of ever forming schemes of happiness, and was confirmed in the opinion he frequently maintained, that the completion of our wishes is often our greatest misfortune.

Of the ruin of Sir Walter's fortune he had not the remotest idea, and when informed of it, was equally shocked and surprised. Mr. Howard had a great friendship for Sir Walter; he admired the open, ingenuous, unsuspecting character of the Baronet, and esteemed him for many other good qualities: he was

charitable and humane, and hospitable even to profusion, but negligent of his affairs, and easily imposed on by designing persons. Mr. Howard had been often much grieved at his manner of living, which, he feared, exceeded his income, but not so much as really to injure his fortune seriously: nor indeed would it, but for the pernicious habit he had lately acquired of gaming; a habit so destructive, so subversive of all domestic comfort, that the man who allows himself to be once infatuated by it, seals his own misery, and the ruin of all that are dear to him. Of all amusements, it is the most irrational and cruel; it destroys the health, sours the temper, hardens the heart, and wrecks the peace of mind: like the poison of the Bohan-Upas *,

* There is a poison-tree in the island of Java, which is said, by its effluvia, to have depopulated the country for twelve or fourteen miles round the place of its growth: it is called in the Malayan

its fatal effects are felt by all that come within its vortex, either in a greater or less degree, and no one that ventures to approach it can assure himself that he among the many who fall victims to it shall be the fortunate person to escape.

language Bohan-Upas; with its juice the most poisonous arrows are prepared; and, to procure this, the condemned criminals are sent to the tree with proper directions both to get the juice, and to secure themselves from the malignant exhalations of the tree; and are pardoned, if they bring back a certain quantity of the poison. But, by the registers there kept, not one in four are said to return. Not only animals of all kinds, both quadrupeds, fish, and birds, but all kinds of vegetables also, are destroyed by the effluvia of the noxious tree; so that, in a district of twelve or fourteen miles round it, the face of the earth is quite barren and rocky, intermixed only with the skeletons of men and animals; affording a scene of melancholy beyond what poets have described, or painters delineated. Two younger trees of its own species are said to grow near it.—See note in Dr. Darwin's Loves of the Plants, Canto III. line 238.

Happy would it be for thousands, if, like that fatal tree, there was room to doubt of its existence, or its baneful effects!

In about a week Sir Walter returned from London, and informed Mr. Howard, who waited on him as soon after his return as possible, that he had, with his son's assistance, been able to satisfy, for six months at least, the most clamorous of his creditors; and that he had hopes his son would be prevailed on in time to offer his hand to Lady Adelina; as he had partly consented, at the earnest entreaties of his father, to pay a visit to Delville Castle in the course of the winter.

Mr. Howard thought it more than probable that Sir Walter had suffered himself to believe what he so earnestly wished, without having very strong reason for his belief; but he forebore to mention his surmises, being unwilling to disturb his present serenity.

Sir Walter inquired very tenderly after Louisa; and when informed by Mr. Howard that she had consented to act agreeably to his wishes, he expressed his sense of her goodness in the warmest terms. "She is a dear, generous girl," said he, "and merits every happiness this world can afford. Would to God I could reward her as she deserves! My boy and she are worthy of each other. My folly has prevented my having the happiness of uniting them: but if I can do any thing else to serve her, most willingly may she command me."

Mr. Howard thanked him with energy for his kind offer, which gave him, he said, great pleasure, as he was convinced of the sincerity with which it was made. "I rejoice," added he, "to find that you have the justice neither to dislike or blame her, for what may occasion you disappointment, for I wish her to retain your friendship, and that of

your family; as, without it, if I should be taken from her, she will have no friend to direct and console her; the secluded life I have led, having prevented me from introducing her to any society but that of your family."

Sir Walter again assured Mr. Howard that he would always consider himself bound to be her friend, for the readiness with which she had consented to combat her own inclination, in order to oblige him.

"I should be the most unjust of men," said he, with warmth, "if I felt the least resentment towards her, for having engaged my son's affection, or for being sensible of his worth, which I am sorry, on her own account, to find is the case; and I sincerely hope she will not suffer her mind to dwell on the disappointment, so as to injure her health. Lady Stanley talks," continued he, "of going shortly to Bath; what say you to Louisa's accompanying her? Change of scene

will probably be of great service, by diverting her mind from thoughts that will of necessity occupy it, in the quiet retirement she is accustomed to. My son will not be with us," interrupted he, seeing Mr. Howard about to object, "and if he should think of joining us, we can easily find an opportunity of removing her."

Mr. Howard said, he doubted whether Louisa would consent to go; but if she did, he would readily agree to it, as he was of Sir Walter's opinion, that it would tend to prevent the effects of too much reflection, which, in her present frame of mind, would, he feared, be injurious to her. But as he had in confidence imparted to Sir Walter the state of her heart, he requested that the knowledge of it might be confined to his own breast, as Louisa's delicacy would be sensibly wounded, if she had an idea that it was known. This the Baronet promised to observe.

The next day Lady Stanley herself

made the same proposal, that Louisa should accompany her to Bath. She said she was lost without the society of her daughters, (as Miss Stanley had gone with her sister, Lady Belmour,) therefore, the company of Louisa would be a great acquisition.

When Mr. Howard first mentioned to Louisa the invitation he had received for her, she positively declined its acceptance.

"No, my dear Sir," said she, "I will never with my own consent leave you; I cannot be happier any where than here: I do not wish for the pleasures of Bath, or any other place. My only wish is to continue with you in this happy retirement, where every spot brings to my mind some pleasing remembrance, some endearment conferred, or some benefit received from you, and my dear kind instructress. In contributing to your ease or amusement, believe me, I shall taste of purer happiness than I possibly could

find in crowded ball-rooms, or those splendid circles of fashionable society, in which Lady Stanley so much delights. I feel that I am not formed, either by nature or habit, to enjoy such a life."

Mr. Howard knew that the affection Louisa expressed for him was sincere, but he also saw, in her objections to leave him, powerful reasons that she should for a time be removed from scenes calculated to cherish, even in spite of herself, recollections it was indispensably requisite she should banish: he therefore inwardly rejoiced that so favourable an opportunity presented itself to detach her from them.

Most earnestly then did he recommend her to comply with the desire of Lady Stanley. "We ought, my dear child," said he, "to accustom ourselves to oblige each other, and give up our wishes to gratify the inclinations of our friends, when it can be done with propriety. It softens the asperities of our natures, and makes us more amiable, and better able

to bear the various disappointments and vexations we are subject to in life."

"Lady Stanley thinks, too, she is doing you a favour by procuring you pleasure, in her opinion, of a superior kind: she will therefore consider you ungrateful, if you do not accept her invitation. But, by accompanying her, you will gratify her, and, I hope, receive benefit and pleasure yourself. No part of her family will be with her, or I would not advise your going: when they rejoin her, I wish you by all means to return to me; four and twenty hours will, you know, bring you to me, or me to you, if necessary."

Louisa, who saw, by the earnestness of Mr. Howard, that he wished her to go, no longer objected. Lady Stanley was made acquainted with her determination, and Louisa prepared to leave, for the first time, the abode of her happy childhood, and since maturer age, with a sentiment of regret bordering on agony, which she vainly endeavoured to subdue.

Her departure was fixed to take place the ensuing week. The interim she employed in preparations for her journey, in visiting every spot endeared to her by long habit, and in taking leave of her poor pensioners, and providing for their convenience during her absence.

The idea of quitting them for even a short time, drew tears of unfeigned sorrow from the eyes of several, who had long been accustomed to receive from her hands the little comforts their age and infirmities had left them capable of enjoying. She thanked them for this proof of their gratitude and regard, and soothed them with an assurance that her absence would not be of long continuance, assuring them at the same time that she would not be unmindful of their welfare, though at a distance.

The visit to her mother's grave, and that of her dear friend Mrs. Martha, she found the most afflicting: she deferred it till the last, that the impression on her

mind might not be effaced by any subsequent event. As she knelt by their tomb, and implored a blessing from the Power in whose more immediate presence she always considered herself when there, she kissed the ring worn as a memorial of her friend, and pressing it to her bosom, "This," said she, "will be as a talisman to preserve me from evil and folly, when I am far removed from objects so deservedly dear. When I look on it, I shall remember the misfortunes of the one, and the wise instructions of the other; and that shall strengthen my virtue, and enable me cheerfully to perform my duty in whatever situation I may chance to be placed.

CHAP. VIII.

Yet hard the task to heal the bleeding heart,
To bid the still recurring thought depart;
Tame the fierce grief and stem the rising sigh,
And curb rebellious passion with reply;
Calmly to dwell on all that pleas'd before,
And yet to know that all shall please no more.

CRABB.

WHEN the time of her departure arrived, Louisa found herself too much agitated to give utterance to the adieu which trembled on her lips, but sinking on the shoulder of Mr. Howard, she sobbed in agony. Not much less affected than herself, Mr. Howard pressed her to his heart with energetic tenderness; but wishing his example should fortify her against the grief of a first separation, he with assumed cheerfulness spoke of the short time she would be absent, and

of the pleasure he hoped she would experience in returning again to him, and to those scenes that were so dear to her. "Be careful of your health, my dear child," said he, "and in every difficulty, to which your inexperience may expose you, apply to me. The good sense you possess will, if you are guided by it, preserve you from yielding to unavailing regrets. And I trust that when we meet again, I shall have no reason to lament having trusted you from me. Farewel! And may the Divine Protector of the fatherless restore you to me still innocent and happy!"

Her tears spoke the nature of her feelings, and the strength of her affection for the benevolent protector of her youth, but words were denied her; and when seated in the carriage that was to convey her from him, she felt as if she should never again behold him, and ardently wished she had not consented to leave him.

As long as she could see him she leaned on the carriage window, waving her hand with affectionate tenderness, and when a turn in the road hid him from her sight, she sunk back overcome with emotion. Sir Walter and Lady Stanley both kindly soothed her, and had soon the satisfaction of seeing her regain a certain degree of composure; but this she did not effect without an effort to suppress those feelings which she conceived would be distressing to her friends. Lady Stanley received her apologies with complacency, but could not help wondering that she should be so violently affected at leaving a retirement, which to her Ladyship would have been insupportably irksome. Sir Walter, who knew better the state of her feelings than his lady, was not surprised, but most kindly exerted himself to compose her spirits.

She felt his kindness, and resolved not to appear ungrateful.

By degrees the whole party became abstracted: Lady Stanley closed her eyes, and reclined in a corner of the carriage; Sir Walter sunk into a deep reverie; and Louisa found herself perfectly at ease, because she was unobserved.

A pensive sadness, not unpleasing to a mind of sensibility, stole over her soul. The morning was in unison with her feelings; every thing was calm and serene; no sound was heard but the plaintive bleating of the lambs in the distant folds, and the chirping of the domestic robin in the hedges of the cottage gardens. It was now the beginning of November: the sun, as if unwilling to behold the decay of vegetable nature, had veiled his refulgent face in a thick cloud, which cast a sombre hue on all around.

Some rain had fallen during the night, and it still hung like tears on the withered leaves and the last flaunting wild flowers, that skirted the sides of the road; their beauty now soiled, and their heads bent, as if in quiet submission to the will of that Being, who would renew their vernal bloom when the dreary season of winter was past.

A gentle breeze, that for a few moments sprang up, scattered the last leaves of the lofty elm to the dust. They seemed, as they fell, to convey a lesson to the reflecting mind, of the instability of human greatness; which, like them, the breath of adversity might in a moment level with the meanest of the sons and daughters of mortality.

Louisa sighed as she thought of the mutability of human happiness. To-day, thought she, we are rich in the possession of what we think permanent felicity; and to-morrow, a sudden blast of

misfortune, which no human foresight could have prevented, comes, and disperses our waking dreams of lasting bliss! Like the leaves so lately green and flourishing, they are shaken from the root that nourished them, and are found again no more."

"Starting we wake, and find ourselves undone."

As they proceeded on their journey, every step presented some new beauty in the landscape to call forth the admiration of Louisa, who had never before been so far distant from home. She devoured with rapture the passing scene, rendered doubly interesting by the never-failing charm of novelty.

Sir Walter was delighted with the justness and elegance of her remarks: he pointed out to her every thing worthy of her notice, and told her who were the proprietors of the several estates they

passed, giving her at the same time a brief sketch of the history of those who were any way remarkable for the brilliancy of their talents, or the splendour of their fortunes.

It was not till the second day that they arrived at the far-famed city of Bath, alike the resort of the gay and happy, the sick and the unfortunate.

The objects that every place presents here, and which, one would imagine, ought to convey a striking lesson on the folly of dissipation, and a life devoted to pleasure, appear only to act as a stimulus to fresh enjoyment; pleasure is here pursued with avidity, as if to banish the reflection of what human nature may be reduced to, without considering that the very means they take to avoid the miseries to which human nature is liable, hasten their approach.

Louisa felt impatient to take a survey of a city she had heard so much spoken

of, but her curiosity was obliged to yield to the fatigue of a long journey: she therefore retired early to the apartments appropriated to her use; and in the lap of sleep, "nature's soft nurse," soon forgot her curiosity, and the novelty of her situation.

The next day Lady Stanley took her to see every thing she deemed worthy of observation: and having, with the assistance of her own milliner, given rather more an air of fashion to the simplicity of Louisa's dress, she took her in the evening to the rooms, where the beauty of her person, and the elegance and modesty of her appearance, attracted universal admiration.

Louisa, with the natural gaiety of youth, was delighted with all she saw and heard, and no longer wondered at Lady Stanley's taste for pleasures so fascinating: she wrote a particular account of every thing to Mr. Howard, who was rejoiced to find she had recovered her

cheerfulness, and hoped this excursion would be attended with effects the most beneficial.

Sir Walter too was delighted to observe her enter into the amusements of the place with so much satisfaction: he drew conclusions from it the most favourable to his own views, and took every opportunity of promoting schemes of pleasure, as likely to further his wishes; which were, that she should be led to detach her thoughts from his son, and fix her affection on one of the many who evidently admired her: he had no doubt in his own mind but that she might marry very advantageously if she chose, and a short time confirmed his opinion of the power of her attractions, as he had proposals made to him for her by more than one; but when spoken to on the subject, she listened with indifference or disgust, which gave him room to fear that she had not

yet conquered her first attachment. But as he observed her with an attentive eye, he saw plainly that she was struggling to do so.

She continued to partake of every amusement which offered with unabated satisfaction, for several weeks; but not forgetting the love and duty she owed Mr. Howard, she regularly transmitted him an account of every occurrence as it happened: her letters were always expressive of the tenderest affection for him; and though she acknowledged the pleasure she received from her present manner of living, yet she declared to him that it would not be lessened by her return to the rational enjoyments to be obtained in his society.

Mr. Howard, unwilling to throw a damp on that gaiety he expected would have so salutary an effect, and relying on her prudent and virtuous principles, only recommended her in his answers

to be careful of her health, and not to let the seductions of pleasure make her negligent of either that, or the more important duty of relieving the distresses of her fellow-creatures, as far as her abilities would allow. "In such a large and populous city as that in which you now reside," said he, in one of his letters, "you will continually meet with objects to excite your compassion, and call forth the sympathy of your nature. That you may not have the pain of refusing assistance of a pecuniary nature to a deserving object, I enclose you a bank-bill for twenty pounds, and leave you to discriminate the proper mode of disposing of it."

This affectionate attention of Mr. Howard conveyed a reproof to the heart of Louisa. "I do not merit so much tenderness and confidence," said she, as she placed the present of her benevolent friend in her purse. "But I will en-

deavour to regain my own good opinion, by taking care to dispose of this sum in a way that shall be more pleasing to the donor than the last sum I received from him, which, with shame I acknowledge, was all spent in useless trifles. Not one good action have I performed since I came to this place; and though I cannot accuse myself of having committed any thing absolutely ill, yet that is but a negative virtue, very unworthy the conduct I have been taught to pursue. Oh! let me no longer be infatuated with pleasure, or seek a relief from disappointed love in that which will not bear the test of reflection."

With a determination to be more prudent, Louisa accompanied Lady Stanley to a party in the evening; and though she was pressed by her ladyship and several others to play, she resolutely refused; and had the satisfaction to reflect, on her return home, that she had tri-

umphed over a temptation she had several times before yielded to from a false shame, which had prevented her refusing to join in an amusement her reason condemned. This last objection Lady Stanley denominated rusticity, entirely the effects of a country education, proper enough, perhaps, to be observed in the society of Mr. Howard, but quite incompatible with that which she was introduced to. And which, if persisted in, would infallibly expose her to the ridicule of her acquaintance.

The fear of being made the subject of ridicule is certainly one of the greatest stumbling-blocks in the path of inexperienced youth. Few have fortitude to brave its terrors; it has done more mischief than it can ever repair. For, instead of being only used as an instrument to suppress and expose vice; it is generally levelled against religion, and renounced by those who possess neither

And much have they to answer for, who accustom themselves to it, and thus intimidate young people from the practice of virtue, by holding up any particular form they may have been taught to believe right, as formal and unfashionable. A person possessed of a good heart will never ridicule any thing but vice. But a young girl, just entering on the world, does not consider this. Influenced by the example of persons much older than herself, who move in a superior circle to those who have taught her to avoid what is wrong or hurtful, she thinks it must be prejudice and ignorance of the world in them, which made them give such advice. And even should her judgment condemn, her vanity, and the fear of being laughed at, compel her to submit. And thus, the foundation being sapped, the structure gradually falls to the ground, unless the mind is so well stored, and the judgment so sound, as to check the

approach of a second error, by timely repairing the breach made by the first.

Happily for Louisa, the good sense she possessed, and the excellent education she had received, made her despise the sophistry that would condemn what she knew to be right. When reason came to her aid, she was shocked at her want of resolution to refuse compliance, merely from the fear of incurring the laugh of the inconsiderate.

One morning, as she was sitting in Lady Stanley's dressing-room, some neatly embroidered muslin was brought to shew to her ladyship, who slightly examining it, returned it to the servant, saying, she did not wish to purchase it. The maid seemed unwilling to give up her embassy, without having made an effort for success; she, therefore, began to extol it for the neatness of the work, and the elegance of the design, and thinking to recommend it further, said

it was the work of a lady, whom misfortune had reduced to this expedient to obtain support. Lady Stanley, whose temper was rather irritable, commanded the servant, in a haughty tone, to take it away, and not trouble her again with any thing of the sort; and added, "It is very probable the muslin has been stolen, instead of having been worked by the person who brought it to you. What with subscriptions for novels by decayed gentlewomen," continued her ladyship, "which, after all, are never published, and fancy-works of little use, if a person was as rich as Crœsus, it would be all drawn from them in a place where there are so many demands on one's liberality."

The servant withdrew, evidently much hurt at the anger of her lady, and the ill success she had had in endeavouring to dispose of the work. Louisa could not help observing the cautious prudence

which Lady Stanley had displayed on the present occasion, and the reasons which she had so readily given, to evade parting from a sum of money which would have been a mere trifle, compared with what she had seen her throw away upon the most frivolous things, to gratify her vanity. She was shocked at the want of feeling discovered by her ladyship, and determined to take an opportunity of inquiring into the nature of the lady's distress, who had met with so little compassion, and whose industry had been so hardly treated; and if it was in her power, she resolved to assist her.

A few hours after, as Louisa was reading in her own apartment, a gentle tap at her door drew her attention, and to her request that they would come in, Lady Stanley's woman presented herself with the same piece of muslin in her hand. Courtesying, and apologizing for the liberty she had taken, she proceeded to

state that she had been employed to offer the muslin to her lady to purchase, by Mrs. Mason, the person who owned the house they were in; that it was the property of a young lady who was in great distress, and now lay too ill in bed either to work any more, or to dispose of what she had already done.

"Finding I had such ill success with my lady," continued Martin, "I thought I would ask you, Miss, to buy it, as I know you are always so kind and generous to every body in distress; for I cannot bear to return it, having said that I knew my lady would buy it, as it was so very pretty; and now it will be such a disappointment to the poor lady, who has worked at it night and day. I am sure it made my heart ache, when Mrs. Mason told me how she cried while she worked, and how she blamed herself for having, by her own fault, brought herself to such distress. But I believe,

from what I can learn, that it is more owing to the false-heartedness of her lover than herself. But if it is not, the poor thing is sorry for it, and is now in distress; therefore we ought to forgive her; for, as Mr. Howard said one Sunday, in his sermon, how can we expect mercy from God, if we do not bestow it on our fellow-creatures? and that their having done amiss was no plea for us to despise them, or refuse to help them; for that Jesus forgave Mary Magdalen, who was a great sinner, and surely we ought not to be ashamed of following such an example."

"You are very good," said Louisa, "to remember the excellent precepts of Mr. Howard, and to endeavour to practise them also: many who have had the advantage of his instructions have not profited equally by them, though it might have been more expected. To convince you of the satisfaction that I

feel at this proof of the goodness of your heart, I will purchase the muslin, and you shall be gratified with my permission to inquire more particularly into the situation of the young person you mention, and likewise to offer her every assistance that it is in my power to bestow."

Louisa then gave her a little present, as a token of her esteem, and dismissed her, after having desired her to make inquiries after the young person, and inform her of the result the next morning.

"That I will with pleasure, Miss," said the good-natured Abigail, "if I had no other reason for it but to show my gratitude for the kindness of Mr. Howard to my poor father and mother at M——, to whom he has been so good: I know he would be as much pleased that I should do any thing to oblige you, as if I did it to himself. He is so good,

that every body must love him, and every one that belongs to him."

"Ah!" said Louisa, a virtuous glow of satisfaction kindling in her heart as the servant retired, "this is the happy effects of benevolence! with what grateful fervour does this poor girl speak of the kindness of Mr. Howard, and humbly try to imitate his noble humanity to the distressed! The goodness of such a man is a shield to his house: every part of his family experiences the benefit of his virtues. In such reverence are the good held, even by the wicked and profligate, that not only are they respected, but the meanest of their dependents, as though they were supposed to possess a portion of the same benign spirit."

From these reflections, Louisa was summoned to attend Lady Stanley in the drawing-room, and to her surprise, the moment she entered, was clasped in the arms of her lively friend Miss Stanley,

who, with Lord and Lady Belmour, had just arrived at Bath. After a few moments devoted to mutual congratulations, Louisa received those of Lady Belmour and her lord. The latter was profuse in his compliments, and declared, unawed by the presence of his lady, that he had not seen so much beauty and loveliness since he left Stanley Hall.

"Your lordship is disposed to flatter me at the expense of your sincerity, I believe," said Louisa; "for I cannot possibly deserve half the fine things that you have said."

"Oh no, by Heaven!" exclaimed his lordship; "the highest eulogium that I could make would fall short of the admiration which I feel for you."

"You see," said Miss Stanley, "the honourable title of Benedict has not robbed his lordship of his gallantry; he still has eyes to distinguish beauty in others besides his own wife."

"Yes," rejoined Lady Belmour, "he certainly has, and what is a happier circumstance, his fertile imagination can create them where they do not exist."

"No, faith, Armida," replied his lordship, "I do not create them in Miss Fitzormond; you certainly over-rate my abilities now; I only admire what is obvious to every one."

"But I may with justice, I hope you'll allow, call your politeness in question," returned she.

"By no means," answered his lordship; "for you know, my beautiful Armida, when praising the beauty of any of your sex, I always except you."

To the great relief of Louisa, Lady Stanley changed the subject, by inquiring after the family they had just left at Delville Castle, more particularly than she had done before.

"You may expect to see them here soon," replied Lord Belmour. "My

father has had a severe attack of his old complaint, the gout; and as he always finds the Bath waters efficacious in restoring him to health, he will, no doubt, try them again."

"As for your son," continued his lordship, "I do not know what waters would restore him, except the waters of Lethe; some such oblivious draught he certainly wants, to make him forget the charms of some cruel fair-one: but who she is, I will not say."

As he spoke, his eyes turned upon Louisa, who, trembling and blushing, let hers fall beneath the meaning glances of his lordship.

"Your lordship now surely jests," said Lady Stanley: "in the letter we received about a week since, informing us of his having at last paid his visit to Delville Castle, I observed no symptoms of this violent nature, to endanger either his health or peace."

"Do not be alarmed," exclaimed Miss Stanley; "Lord Belmour only supposes Walter has been wounded by Dan Cupid, that regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms: but he is in no danger, I assure you. The same bright eyes that directed the shaft of the little god, will also convey a healing balm, to counteract its baneful effects."

This conversation was particularly painful to Louisa, as it convinced her that she had not yet triumphed over her passion for the object of their discourse. The expressive looks of Lord Belmour, which were directed towards her during Miss Stanley's speech, plainly proved, she feared that his lordship suspected the nature of her feelings.

"If," said she, when she found herself in the privacy of her own apartment, "Mr. Stanley should accompany the Earl's family to Bath, I must immediately quit it. The scrutinizing eyes of

Lord Belmour will discover the secret I would hide from all eyes, but more especially from his. I will write to Mr. Howard, and request him to send for me."

She wept as she thought of the necessity there was for her to avoid meeting a man whose society had always afforded her so much satisfaction.

"Happy days of innocence and peace," sighed she, "when in the dear shades of the Manor House we wandered hand in hand together, careless as the birds that warbled around us, or bounded with frolic feet over the wide-extended lawns, playful as the lambs, and, like them, as unconscious of future evil! Had we known that the incidents of a few years would make it almost a crime to think of each other, how it would have embittered our youthful happiness! but happily that pang was spared us. Then it was that I tasted happiness unalloyed, but never, never shall I again. With

what pleasure do I remember every occurrence! How delightful was it, when seated on a summer's evening beneath the old mulberry-tree on the lawn, (that favourite seat of my lost friend,) to watch the declining rays of the setting sun! With what rapture have we beheld the rich purple and gold gradually giving way to the mild and sober grey, till meek twilight, with all her sweet soothing charms, has rivalled in our estimation the resplendent god of day! But even then the perfume of the flowers, the song of the nightingale, and the beauty of the heavenly bodies, gave me less pleasure, if Walter Stanley was away: his presence added charms to every scene. That time, alas! is past: but I cannot help remembering such things were, and were most pleasing."

The good sense she possessed prevented her indulging those reflections long; she

knew how injurious they were; she, therefore, sought for consolation in books that would amend the heart as well as amuse the fancy; and when her mind was composed, she had recourse to poetry, which afforded her the highest gratification. Impressed with the recollection of past scenes, she composed the following monody:

When with my heart's first friend I lov'd to stray,
His look, his voice, which now is heard no more,
Remembrance treasur'd, as her proudest store,
And said, "Bless'd hours, when ye are roll'd away,
"These images of bliss my heart shall keep;"
And then with mingling joy I turn'd to weep,
And thought the mem'ry of each happy hour
In after days might as delightful prove,
As when, in pure affection's humble bow'r,
Young friendship seem'd to ripen into love:
Ah! days for ever gone! how I but woo
The shade of those endearments, and recal
The hill, the mead, the tree, the waterfall,
Where once we stray'd. Back on the lovely view,

Alas! I turn my longing eyes in vain,
Whose sad remembrance but augments my pain.
Yet not unpleasing is the pensive hour
When, far remov'd from fashion's idle train,
I feel her poor allurements, ah! how vain!
And find that virtue only has the pow'r,
In sunshine, or beneath cold fortune's show'r,
The self-approving conscience to sustain.

CHAP. IX.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd?
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow?
Raze out the written troubles of the brain?
And, with some sweet oblivious antidote,
Cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff,
Which weighs upon the heart?

I do repent me, as it is an evil,
And take the shame with joy.

SHAKESPEAR.

THE next day Lady Stanley's woman waited on Louisa, to acquaint her with the result of the inquiries which she had been directed to make concerning the young embroiderer: but the only information to be obtained was from Mrs. Mason, her landlady, who appeared unwilling to communicate more to Mrs. Martin than that the young lady was unfortunate. "If," said she, "Miss Fitz-

ormond will condescend to pay her a visit, I have no doubt but that she will confide her sorrows to her. I am not unacquainted with the particulars of her life, or present situation; but what I do know was told me in confidence; therefore I cannot impart them to any one without her permission: but it would be doing an act of the truest benevolence to procure her the countenance and sympathy of so good a lady as Miss Fitzormond."

"I ventured to assure the kind landlady," said Martin, "that you would come and see the poor young lady, and administer all the comfort in your power, for I said that neither Mr. Howard, Mrs. Martha, his worthy sister, or Miss Fitzormond, had ever been used to turn a deaf ear to the cries of distress, or the misfortunes of any one."

"I should be unworthy the love of the amiable being you have mentioned,

if I did," interrupted Louisa; "for he, and the dear departed monitress of my youth, always took pains to impress on my mind the sacred duty of doing good to my suffering fellow-creatures as the first of virtues; and while I have the power, I will never neglect any opportunity that offers of performing that duty."

The warm heart of Louisa, which glowed to impart consolation to the afflicted, could not think of delaying the comfort she hoped to bestow; she therefore, as it was but a short distance from the Crescent, accompanied by Martin, set off to do the work of mercy and compassion.

On her arrival at Mrs. Mason's, she left her companion with the children of the former, who conducted her to a small room in the attic story; where on a bed, which, though perfectly clean and neat, was far removed from every idea of

luxury, lay a female, whose delicate hands and elegant contour of countenance evidently proved she had not been used to hardship or sorrow. Her eyes were closed, and the long dark lashes that shaded them were moistened with tears, the traces of which were visible on her pale cheeks.

Mrs. Mason advanced before Louisa, and drawing back the curtain at the head of the bed, which was the only part that was so defended; "Miss Conway," said she, "the young lady who so tenderly inquired after you, and offered to afford you any assistance in her power, has kindly taken the trouble to come and see you."

"She is too good to interest herself so much in the fate of an unfortunate being whose sorrows are drawing to a close," said the person addressed, as she unclosed her eyes, and stretched out her emaciated hand to welcome and thank Louisa for

her attention to her. A transient blush for a moment illumined her pale interesting face, as she glanced on the elegant appearance of Louisa, contrasted with the mean and humble apartment she had to receive her in. It was a blush that seemed to say, the kind being who would, amid the pleasure and splendours of this fashionable place, seek out the child of misfortune, has a soul which rises superior to such paltry considerations. I will not detract from her virtue by appearing for a moment to think she regards them. Oh! that the fault which has reduced me to such an abject state could be beheld with as compassionate an eye, or borne with as much fortitude by myself. The rapidity of her thoughts, as well as the nature of them, were not misunderstood by Louisa. The imploring look and ingenuous blush was an appeal that touched the tender heart of her to whom it was made.

Taking the hand that was stretched out towards her, she pressed it between her own, and in the soft voice of pity and consolation, endeavoured to rescue the sinking spirits of the fair invalid; a tear fell from her eye on the delicate hand that feebly returned an involuntary pressure.

"Soothing as is the sight of such tenderness to my lacerated heart!" exclaimed the poor forlorn being, "I must entreat you to forbear bestowing it on a wretch, who is conscious of not deserving those marks of kindness the virtuous only merit. Ah! when you know the extent of my crimes, you will fly from me with abhorrence, and consider me too vile to bestow another thought upon: but the dread of that shall not deter me from making you acquainted with my woeful story, if you will condescend to listen to it. It may be the means of saving one innocent being from the destruction that has overwhelmed me;

who was once also as innocent. No rank is excepted from the insidious treachery of man, formed by nature for our protector, our friend, and adviser; but by the domineering influence of the passions, which are suffered to gain an ascendancy over him, converted into our inveterate foe and certain destroyer. Merciful Father! (cried she, tears gushing through her fingers, which were spread over her face) to what has the cruelty of man consigned me, who, confiding in his honour, was basely betrayed, where I had treasured up my every hope of happiness! Yet the remembrance of what I have endured is not so painful as the conviction that he whom I loved could be so base and cruel. This is the sting that wounds deepest; all else I could have borne with fortitude, and submissive resignation."

Louisa, terrified at the effect her grief had on her weak frame, and fearful it would hasten her dissolution, which she

apprehended was fast approaching; entreated her to be composed, and avoid thinking of what could not be remedied: "Accuse not yourself, or the apparent cause of your distress," said she, "with your misfortune. The Almighty disposer of happiness and misery deals with us, poor frail mortals, as it seems best to his infinite wisdom: but we should submit to his decrees with patience and humility; convinced it is with mercy he will chastise us. But if the remembrance of the past is so painful to you, try to avoid dwelling on it, as the only means of preserving your life; and be assured no effort shall be wanting on my part to make your future life more comfortable than it has latterly been: I will now insure you the protection of the first of human beings, and have no doubt but I shall be able to interest the benevolence of Lady Stanley also in your favour, which will be more beneficial to you than

I can possibly be, except the friend I alluded to was with me, who, I am sure, were he here, would immediately befriend you."

The agitation of Miss Conway increased on hearing the name of Lady Stanley. She mildly intreated Louisa not to mention her situation to that Lady. "I have insuperable reasons that she, of all others, should not know of my vicinity to her abode and that of her family: the knowledge of my sad fate would not interest her in my favour, but would probably, indeed certainly, deprive me of the protection and tenderness I feel assured you are inclined to bestow on a forlorn outcast, whose days are drawing to a close."

Louisa felt a degree of alarm at the dread betrayed by the object of her solicitude of Lady Stanley. If, thought she, I am led by my desire to succour an unfortunate into an action that may

prove disagreeable to any part of that family, how much shall I regret having yielded to the suggestions of my heart, without having first maturely considered whether the object was deserving or not. If she is unworthy, Lady Stanley will have a juster plea than she sometimes has to condemn what she calls my romantic generosity; but even if she is not, concealment is repugnant to my nature; and if the honour or welfare of any part of the family is concerned, I will decline the confidence this poor creature seems disposed to place in me.

After some hesitation, Louisa declared this to be her determination; but at the same time repeated her former promise of contributing to the present comfort of the unknown invalid; and also of making Mr. Howard acquainted with her situation, and procuring his protection for her.

"I certainly have no right to dictate

to you how to proceed," replied Miss Conway with a deep-drawn sigh: "Yet I had ventured to hope you would deign to listen to my story. I feel an unaccountable desire to impart it to you, and, more particularly now I find you form part of the family of Sir Walter Stanley. If, when you have heard it, you think it right to inform Lady Stanley of it, you shall not be opposed by me."

Louisa, though endowed with more sense than commonly falls to the lot of fashionable females, was not without a certain portion of curiosity to know what could have reduced so lovely and interesting a woman to the condition in which she found her. Every word and action plainly convinced her she had been bred a stranger to the meanness of her present situation.

As she was revolving these thoughts in her mind, an idea struck her, that Walter

Stanley might perhaps be concerned in the misfortunes of Miss Conway.

The unwillingness which the latter had expressed that Lady Stanley should be made acquainted with her situation, rather corroborated her momentary conjecture, and made her the more anxious to hear the history of this unfortunate woman, that she might be enabled either to confirm her painful suspicions, or at once destroy them.

With an aching heart, both for the misery of the poor unfortunate being before her, and at the same time with suspicions of unworthiness in the man on whom she had bestowed her tenderest affections, did Louisa sooth, with the accents of condolence, the agitated spirits of her who had early fallen a victim to the arts and capricious treachery of man.

Before her departure from hence, she promised to return the following day,

and hear the story which was either to confirm or put an end to her fears, that Walter Stanley might have been an artful seducer.

A sleepless night succeeded that day which had first given her an ill opinion of her heart's secret favourite.

Louisa arose, filled with anxiety, and availed herself of the first opportunity to visit Miss Conway, unknown to Lady Stanley. She found her more composed, and apparently better than she could have hoped, from the weak state in which she had left her.

After a short time passed in kind inquiries on one side, and expressions of gratitude on the other, Miss Conway addressed Louisa, in a solemn and impressive manner, as follows:

"As I feel but too certainly that I have but a short time to live, I am anxious to make you, Miss Fitzormond, acquaint-

ed with my sad story, and to interest your pity in behalf of an innocent being who will shortly be introduced into this world of sorrow." As Louisa here betrayed marks of surprise and alarm,—Miss Conway continued—"You are alarmed! you did not imagine there was another to share my misery and disgrace; but, miserable that I am, it is too true. The just consequence of my crime is that I shall not be suffered to live to watch over its welfare; but I am not so debased as to be indifferent regarding it. I would fain procure for my unborn infant a protector, virtuous and good; one who, not having deviated from the path of rectitude, can behold, with an eye of charity and compassion, the frail being, who, from vanity, and a too great reliance on her own strength, yielded to the artifices of man, and the seductions of passion. Fatal consequences must ever ensue, if the latter are not kept in constant subjec-

tion to reason, which I, alas! was never taught to consider at all necessary; inclination and caprice solely influencing all my actions during childhood—that precious time, so often neglected by the fond parent, but of so great importance to the future happiness of the child. Too great severity has no doubt ruined thousands; but mistaken fondness has destroyed tens of thousands, and I, alas! am an instance of the latter.

"My father was an officer of high rank in the army; he had spent the greater part of his life in active service, and had been rewarded with promotion, and the thanks of his sovereign, to which were added the love of all under his command, and the nominal friendship of a large circle of acquaintances. The reasonableness of his commands, and the suavity of his manners, insuring him the first, and his hospitality and urbanity the latter. His wit and good humour were unbound-

ed, and an inexhaustible fund of anecdotes rendered his company and conversation irresistibly pleasing to the young and the gay. Our house was the resort of all the military men stationed in and near the town where we resided; my father having the principal command.

" I was an only child, and at a very early period had the misfortune to lose my mother, of whom, I have been told, my father was dotingly fond, so much so, that he would never think of marrying again, though several ladies were known to have been solicitous to obtain that honour. When quite a child, he delighted to introduce me to his gay acquaintance: my wit and beauty were extolled as prodigies, and I was the little divinity of the mansion, and the plaything and solace of my dear, tender, but mistaken father, who, protesting he discovered in me the genuine marks of a good disposition, declared it should not

be spoiled by discipline or restraint, which, he said, only tended to make girls deceitful and affected. Too much learning also, he maintained, rendered them less amiable, as it invariably made them either pedantic or romantic. All useful reading or study he termed superfluous, and never wished me to learn any thing but the ornamental part of education: music and dancing he considered as indispensably necessary in the education of a young woman of fashion; as, without that, she must, he thought, be a mere cypher in society. As those were accomplishments I was very fond of, I soon acquired them, to the utmost extent of my father's wishes; and as I had a sensible woman for a governess, she took opportunities to instruct me in something more than mere superficial accomplishments.

"When I was about sixteen, I had a very advantageous proposal of marriage

made me by a gentleman, nearly as old as my father, 'tis true, but of an amiable disposition, and good fortune. He offered the most liberal settlements; but I had never thought of marriage: I had no prepossession in favour of him or any other man, and therefore carelessly, but good-humouredly, declined his proposals. But he was not to be so easily dismissed: he renewed his suit, and said I should dispose of his fortune in any way I chose; the whole of it was at my service: I should dictate what settlement I wished, and he would gladly acquiesce. He entreated my father to use his influence with me, which he promised, though at the same time saying he would by no means influence my decision.

"He accordingly spoke to me very seriously on the subject. 'Emily,' said he, with more solemnity than I had ever seen him assume, 'if you think you can love Colonel Malcolm, do not trifle with him:

he is a man of honour in the strictest sense of the word: he has conceived a real affection for you, and will, I am convinced, make a good husband: his offers are most noble, and his professions sincere: if my dear girl can overlook the disparity of years between him and herself, I think I may venture to pronounce few marriages will be more auspicious. It afflicts me to say, the gaiety of my disposition, and my expensive establishment, have prevented my making any provision for you: but I have no doubt but your beauty, wit and accomplishments will procure you a husband at any time—I mean one of rank and fortune. Therefore I by no means wish you to accept of the Colonel from interested motives: I only recommend it as an eligible thing, if your inclination points that way. But, if you are at all averse to it, I will let the Colonel know it, and request him to desist from all further importunities.'

" I assured my father it would be much more agreeable to me to decline the offered hand of Colonel Malcolm, not feeling the slightest predilection in his favour; and that, as I was so young, I should prefer continuing under his protection for some years to come, before the most advantageous union that could possibly be proposed.

" My father (who, I believe, secretly wished me to decline the hand of Colonel Malcolm from an unwillingness he felt to deprive himself of my society, which, he frequently declared, constituted his principal happiness) readily consented to my wish, and undertook to apprise the worthy man of my resolution, which so much grieved him, that he very shortly resigned his commission, and determined by travel to wear out the impression my charms (as he was pleased to term them) had made on his heart. Before his de-

parture, he requested to take leave of me, and told me with many sighs, and even tears, I was the only woman who had ever been able to make him wish to enter the state of matrimony. That as he well knew our affections were not at our own disposal, he felt no resentment towards me for not bestowing mine in return for his; that he should ever retain the warmest friendship for me; and if ever I should stand in need of a friend, not to hesitate in applying to him both for advice or assistance in any emergency, as he should consider that the happiest moment of his life, which was devoted to my service. The generosity of this excellent man excited for a moment my warmest gratitude and esteem, and made me almost then repent of not having acceded to his offer. How many times since have I regretted my hasty rejection of his honourable suit! We parted, and I have

never seen him since. I was told that he went to Russia, where he had a brother resident, but I never knew for certain.

"I have dwelt longer on this subject than you will probably think necessary; but it is a duty that I owe to worth like his, that I should lose no opportunity of extolling this generous, disinterested conduct: indeed I feel satisfaction almost amounting to pride, in reflecting that one man at least, of unsullied honour, of splendid fortune, and personal endowments, did not think it beneath him to solicit my hand in marriage. Cruelly and treacherously as I have been used, I am compelled to acknowledge that I have met with one truly liberal-minded man; therefore I may believe there are others: with such another, however, it was not my lot to meet. During the space of two years after this event, I was constantly told of the power of my charms, and implored to compassionate the woes

they occasioned: but it was no longer in my power to do so, for I had felt the all-powerful force of love myself for one object (as I then thought) truly estimable; every other candidate for my favour was then dismissed with firmness.

"He only who had inspired my youthful heart with the delightful sensations of a first affection, forbore to solicit my consent that he should apply to my father for his approbation of his addresses: he even appeared to wish to conceal his admiration of me particularly from him, and so much was my dread of losing him, that I assisted to deceive my father respecting our mutual sentiments.

"Lord Belmour (for that is the name of the perfidious man who has destroyed me)—"

Louisa, at these words, started with surprise, but it was mingled with satisfaction; her fears were now removed: Walter Stanley was not the guilty being

she now blamed herself for once supposing him: she however concealed her real feelings on the present occasion from Miss Conway, and repeating, in an ejaculating tone, "Lord Belmour!" she allowed her to proceed.

"Alas!" continued Miss Conway, "it was indeed—the same who, when in private, evinced the tenderest affection for me, repeatedly declaring that life would be a burthen to him if he had not my permission to cherish the fond hope of one day calling me his: 'But, my dear Emily,' he would add, 'particular circumstances forbid a reasonable hope that our union can take place immediately: unfortunately, my father has imbibed certain prejudices respecting birth, which I fear not all your beauty and merit would have the power to conquer; yet time, and the affection he bears me, may perform wonders in our favour. But should I not obtain his consent to

our union, a few years will make me my own master: with what rapture then shall I present my Emily to an admiring world, adorned with rank as well as superior beauty!'

"I felt my cheeks glow during this discourse, for the dignity of my family had never before been called in question, nor had I ever once supposed that I was not entitled by birth to enter any family in the kingdom: but these objections of his lordship struck me forcibly; I felt humiliated and indignant, though I could not refute them, for I knew that my father had acquired his present rank by his services: but though I knew he could not boast of a long line of illustrious ancestors, yet was his family by no means obscure, his father being a country gentleman of good landed property, but which had not enriched my father, as he was a younger son.

"However mortified I felt, I forbore

to express my resentment, and consented, at the earnest entreaties of his lordship, to conceal our present intimacy from my father, who, his lordship knew, was particularly tenacious of every thing that tended to throw the least slight on me, whom he considered equal in merit and attainments to the first women in the circle of our acquaintance, which were not confined to the middle order of society, many being of equal or superior rank to Lord Belmour's family.

"The idea being once impressed on my mind that I was considered by my lover as his inferior in point of birth, was not easily to be eradicated. I frequently struggled to subdue the passion with which he had inspired me, and to bring my mind to bear with fortitude the loss of him, and accept one of the numerous offers which were made me by men who could not boast the superiority of his lordship.

"But love, and the latent sparks of vanity inherent in my nature, conquered my more prudent resolves: I not only forgot the duty that I owed my father, but the honour he prized more than life, and the dignity of my own character. Duty, honour, peace of mind, were all conquered, all sacrificed, at the shrine of libertinism. With the sophistry of a man practised in the arts of seduction, did Lord Belmour endeavour to reconcile me to myself and to the guilty pleasures of illicit love. My own treacherous heart but too well seconding his arguments, I soon lost sight of that just abhorrence I had at first entertained for my dereliction from the paths of honour and virtue: yet was I not so far debased but that I frequently, with bitter tears, deplored the crime I had committed. On these occasions, Lord Belmour would kneel, and entreat me to spare him the anguish of thinking that I had ceased

to love him. 'If you had not, my Emily,' he would say, 'you would not repent having placed confidence in my honour: you have bound me to you by a debt of gratitude, the return of which nothing shall tempt me to forego. Banish those vain regrets, then. Are you not my beloved, affianced wife? the wife of my heart's best, warmest affections, whom I shall ever love with the most fervent tenderness, and make it the happiness of my life to contribute to yours.'

"This soothing, consolatory tenderness never failed of its desired effect. I studiously concealed from my father our mutual affection. In public, the behaviour of my lover was not more particular than that of any other man, but our private interviews were more frequent, when we made up for the restraint which we had compelled ourselves to suffer.

"But this imprudent indulgence of a guilty passion was not long permitted to

pass with impunity: our secret was discovered by the treachery of my maid, who was the confidant of our amour.

"The recollection of my dear father's indignation and grief, on the knowledge of my dishonour, even now wrings my heart with anguish: in the bitterness of offended honour, of outraged confidence, did he upbraid me with the magnitude of my crime, and denounce vengeance on my vile seducer, whom he loaded with every opprobrious epithet his anger and pride could suggest.

"'The villain!' cried he, 'to rob me of my honour, the proud, the highly cherished honour of a soldier! But he shall repent it; I will wash out this stain in his blood, or mine shall cease to flow, in resenting this daring affront!'

"I wept—I implored, on my knees, that he would allay his anger, and not take vengeance on him I loved so tenderly. I told him it was Lord Bel-

mour's intention to marry me, as soon as he could obtain his father's consent, and declared that I would not survive the loss of either of the two beings so dear to me.

"'Wretched, infatuated girl!' cried my father, tears streaming down his face, 'he has completely made thee his dupe, and rendered me the most miserable of parents! Have I lived to see thee, so amiable apparently, yet so vile; to see the child I so fondly doted on the prey of a despicable seducer; to endure the anguish of seeing her pointed at, and despised? Oh! it distracts me!—miserable father that I am!—But I will exterminate the villain from the earth!—How can I tell you, unfortunate girl, that this man, for whom you have sacrificed father, honour, happiness, will in a few days be the husband of another? I have heard it from several, and heard it with indifference too,

little suspecting how much, how fatally, I was concerned in it.'

"Pale, motionless, almost stiffened with horror, I heard not the last words of my distracted father; but repeating his words, 'the husband of another,' I sunk senseless on the floor, and in that state was conveyed to my chamber, to which I was confined for several days, insensible to all that was passing around."

CHAP. X.

My tears are for the dead; my voice for those that have passed away.

Narrow is thy dwelling now! dark the place of thine abode; with three steps I compass thy grave.

Thou art low indeed. Fallen is the daughter of Morglan!

OSSIAN.

"WHEN I recovered my senses, it was to experience severer woe. A confused idea of what had passed presented itself to my mind. I lay for some time silent, as if to recollect the events that had brought me extended on a bed of sickness: by degrees the whole rushed on my terrified brain. I hastily started up, and inquired for my father. But was only answered by the attendant with an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, at hearing me speak rationally, and con-

jured by her to be composed, as my life depended on it. If you wish, cried I, to preserve my senses, tell me of my father. Oh! tell me in pity, what has happened since I have been in this state!

"Alarmed by the agony my features expressed, and fearing I should relapse into a state of delirium; the terrified nurse told me my father was ill, and confined to his bed; but if I would try to compose myself, I should soon be well enough to see him.

"Oh! cried I, shuddering, (and interpreting a peculiar look of horror I imagined was imprinted on her countenance into a reproach upon me,) my father has been wounded, perhaps murdered! Wretch that I am, I have killed him! I have destroyed the most indulgent, best of parents!

"It was in vain for the nurse to assure me I was not so guilty; that the illness of my father was the visitation of God;

I could not believe her, and was resolved to know the extent of my misery: —for that purpose, I watched an opportunity, when she quitted the room for a short time, to steal to my father's chamber. What a sight presented itself to my agonised view! stretched on the bed, lay the body of my only parent, murdered by me. With a hand nerved by despair, I drew the covering from his face, and gazed with fixed immoveable eyes on those features, now so pale and inexpressive of the grief which had precipitated him to the grave. Those eyes, that had ever beamed affection on me, were now closed, never again to bless me with a look of pity and forgiveness. The remembrance of our last interview rushed in terrific array before me. I recalled his last look of anger, yet mingled with compassion, and sunk senseless on the cold inanimate body.

"The rites of burial were bestowed

on his honoured corse by strangers. I was incapable of attending to any thing: I remained almost in a state of inanity, till aroused by the clamours of the creditors of my dear father. He had died insolvent: the house and furniture were seized, and every thing sold, except what immediately belonged to myself.

"Some family dispute early in life had separated my father from all his relations. My mother's were dead, or dispersed in different parts, far distant from me; and those I had been in the habit of calling friends now stood aloof, or only a few of those, who wished to pass for persons of more sensibility than others, visited me to condole with and give advice. The men too, who had been my most ardent admirers, now looked at me through their glasses with a kind of doubting acknowledgment, as if they would say, 'I think I have met you before—I beg your pardon, you

are so altered, I scarcely knew you!'—Some there were, who condescended to make me an offer of their fortune and protection, on condition that I would honour their villa with my presence. But not one of those who had, during the life-time of my father, when I was supposed to have a good fortune, and he had rank in the army, and interest to advance them, made me an offer of their hand, now came forward with the same generous intentions.

"Indeed, if they had, I would not have accepted them; but I only mention it to show how very rare it is to find men who are disinterested in their attentions to women;—self too often influences all their actions.

"My disgrace, the cause of my subsequent misfortunes, was not known, therefore it could not be imputed to that event. So cautiously had Lord Belmour conducted himself, that few even

suspected our attachment. My father's death (which had not been occasioned by the means I so much feared, though it rendered me no less culpable, I having still been the cause) was imputed to an hereditary gout, to which he was often subject. This indeed was the fact: the violence of his passion, on discovering my guilt, having brought on a severe attack, my illness farther irritating his mind, already too much agitated, threw the disorder into his stomach, which terminated his sorrow for my dishonour and his disgrace with his life on the second day.

"I soon learned the whole of my misfortune, namely, Lord Belmour's desertion and marriage. At the time our intimacy was made known to my father, Lord Belmour had left the neighbourhood of our residence for a few weeks, (as he informed me before his departure,) to pay a visit to a friend in a distant

county with his family. Ah! little then did I think what I was so soon to experience: yet I deserved it all, by my imprudence, by my shameful duplicity, and violation of the first duty of woman.

"I dare not complain of the hardness of my fate—it was incurred by my own folly, vanity, and credulity! What can be too great a punishment for her who by her vices destroyed the parent who fondly loved, and placed his whole happiness in her keeping; who knew no joy, if she was not a partaker in it, and no misery, if she was but prevented from sharing it?

"I now also could no longer deceive myself with regard to the state I was in: with horror and agony inexpressible, I found I should ere long add one more to the list of those unfortunate, defenceless beings, who have no legal claim on the father who gave them life.

"The idea of ever writing to, or by

any means soliciting the compassion and protection of the man who had deliberately ruined me, was abhorrent to my soul. Had he continued unmarried, I should not have thought myself justified in neglecting to do it. But that event had for ever obliterated him from my heart; and to seek to hold converse with him after that, even to do an act of justice, was imposing a greater degradation on myself than any other I had yet sustained.

"My situation, which I was sensible would soon be apparent, made me desirous of quitting the place where I was known, and the few acquaintances which circumstances so disastrous had left me. I accordingly imparted my intentions to a servant, who I believed was attached to me: I was compelled to make her the confidant of my secret, and entreat her advice and assistance, in removing myself and baggage to a secure and retired

place, where I might be concealed, till I had given birth to my infant.

"After some consideration, she fixed upon Bath, as the only place she could think of where I could remain concealed. This I strongly objected to on account of its publicity; but my objections were over-ruled by her telling me she knew a worthy woman who resided there, with whom I could lodge, and who would be of great service to me in my approaching confinement. 'As you will live in perfect retirement,' continued she, 'you need not be apprehensive of meeting any person you know.'

"I was convinced by her reasons, and to Bath we came in the most private manner possible. But my confidence was again abused by her on whom I implicitly relied; she left me a few weeks after my arrival here, taking with her every article of value I possessed, and every

guinea I had in the world, except a few which were in my purse, and therefore escaped her rapacity.

"In this afflicting situation I applied to my landlady, and had the satisfaction to find I had not been deceived when she was represented to me as a worthy woman: she tenderly compassionated my youth and forlorn condition, and exerted every power she possessed to sooth and console me: her benevolent attentions were productive of good effect; I resolved to subdue the grief occasioned by this last misfortune, and make an effort to support myself by the labour of my hands.

"I had occupied very neat apartments on the first floor; those I gave up, and took possession of this room. Mrs. Mason very kindly procuring me materials for needle-work, I applied myself assiduously to it, and by the sale of it have been able to support myself, till

illness, brought on by uneasiness of mind, and a mode of life so different to what I have been accustomed, have reduced me to the state you see, and thrown me entirely on the bounty of strangers. One unexpected blessing has been procured by my labour, as, but for that, I probably should not have been made known to you, who have so nobly and generously sought me out, and have alleviated my sorrows by listening to them, and tenderly sympathizing with me."

Louisa had been very much affected during the recital of Miss Conway, which had not been all made at one time. She saw much in it to condemn, but more to pity; the humility and contrition of the poor unfortunate victim of the gay Lord Belmour being evident in every word and action. Much might, she thought, be said in extenuation of her fault, from the uncontrouled liberty she had been suffered to enjoy, and the

superficial education that had been bestowed on her. Had she been so fortunate as to have had such judicious instructors as I have had, thought Louisa, she would not thus in the bloom of life be sinking into the grave, a prey to remorse and disappointed love. The detestation with which she regards herself for her faults, evinces a mind naturally virtuous; with proper cultivation, she might have been an honour to her sex, and a comfort to her parent. Instead of having precipitated her father to the grave by her vices, her virtues might have strewn his downhill path of life with flowers, and surrounded with a numerous progeny, the offspring of honourable wedded love, he would again have tasted the delight he experienced in marking her opening graces when at their age—a pleasure he appreciated so highly.

After debating with herself some time on her arrival at home, Louisa determin-

ed not to impart Miss Conway's history to any of the Stanleys, till she had consulted Mr. Howard. The decided aversion which that lady had expressed to their being made acquainted with it was her principal reason: yet she feared she should find her visits attended with difficulty; for how could she account for her absence if questioned? and she could not think of wounding the already nearly broken-hearted girl's feelings, by abstaining from seeing her after what had passed. She had promised to see her often, and could she "fail, and play the worthless trifler's part." Oh! no—every feeling of humanity revolted against it. She resolved then to perform her promise as often as circumstances admitted, and to take the earliest opportunity of letting Mr. Howard know the particulars of the sad story.

On meeting the family, she could with difficulty conceal the disgust she felt for Lord Belmour. He, gay and volatile as

ever, appeared determined to persecute her with his attentions: he placed himself next her at dinner, and strove by every means in his power to ingratiate himself into her favour, but without effect. With the image of Miss Conway in her mind, pale, emaciated, dying of a broken heart, she could only view him with horror.

Louisa did not consider that she saw him through a very different medium from that in which Miss Conway had beheld him. She had not been prejudiced against him by the knowledge of any unworthy action. He had presented himself to her youthful, sanguine imagination, as a being worthy her warmest affection: his Lordship's person was certainly superior in manly beauty to that of most young men: he was affable, gay, and good tempered, and could, when he chose, assume the most engaging manners. She loved him, and therefore could not sus-

pect that so fair and specious an exterior concealed a heart capable of the blackest perfidy, ingratitude, and cruelty. And had any friend attempted to draw the veil from her eyes, and shown him to her in his true colours, it is probable she would have considered him as her greatest enemy. How many are there like her, who, dazzled with the outward appearance, forbear to look within! their self-love frequently assisting the deception, they dislike to think they can be deceived, though others may. Thus they rush headlong to destruction, and not till too late, like her, see their error. The Almighty Being who has formed us, and has given us a free will to chuse or reject the good and evil set before us, has placed a monitor in the heart of every one, which never fails to point to the side of virtue, and to sting with remorse every deviation from it: but the counsel of that sure unerring guide is too often rejected by

the impetuosity of youth. Were it not so, the sophistry of the seducer would not so often prevail, and so many lovely accomplished women would not be cut off from society, pitied by one sex, and scorned in almost every instance by the other.

Lady Belmour beheld with evident chagrin the attention her Lord paid to Louisa: her temper, haughty and vindictive, could not brook such an indignity: she had always disliked Louisa both for her beauty, and sweetness of disposition; but that she should be put in competition with her in the estimation of her Lord, was an insult too glaring to be endured:—It signified little to her ladyship that the perfect innocence of Louisa rendered her incapable of such a design: she thought only of the effect; and had Louisa by the most studied coquetry tried to attract the assiduities of Lord Belmour, his lady could not have been

more irritated. The most contemptuous glances and sarcastic insinuations were levelled against the unconscious object of her anger; on whom they fell powerless, from her perfect ignorance of having done any thing to occasion them.

It was not so, however, with Lord Belmour; he saw and felt their force, but that did not deter him from pursuing a conduct which he knew gave great pain and disquietude to his wife: on the contrary, it rather stimulated him to proceed. He had married for no other motive than to get possession of a beautiful woman, whom he had no hopes of ever succeeding with on any other terms. Had her temper been complying, she might have attached him to her for a length of time; but as it was, though she really loved him better than any other being on earth except herself, yet she would not take the trouble to subdue the violence of her temper, or employ

any of those conciliating attentions, so necessary to render the married life happy. Her jealousy of every pretty woman that Lord Belmour chanced to be in company with, rendered her life miserable to herself, and her company irksome to him. The novelty of his situation was worn off; the beauty of his wife, now become familiar to him, no longer possessed that fascination it at first had done; he almost felt disgust at the idea of being united for life to a woman whose sole merit was her personal beauty. So true it is, that beauty in a female is a poor substitute for the want of a good temper. Good sense, and a sweet disposition, will make even a very plain face pleasing; while the want of those agreeable qualifications will destroy the effects which the most beautiful set of features would otherwise produce.

No doubt, something like remorse was

felt at times by his lordship, for the cruelty of his conduct to Miss Conway; but as it was too late to be remedied, he stifled those emotions as they arose. Indeed, he was unacquainted with the full extent of the ruin he had occasioned. Soon after his marriage, he had seen, in the newspapers, the death of General Conway; but the particulars of it, and the share he had had in it, remained unknown to him: fearful of encountering the reproaches he so justly merited from the injured daughter of the deceased, he had avoided writing to or inquiring after her; yet still purposing to do it at some future time, when the height of her resentment should have subsided.

But the time never came, that he could hope to obtain forgiveness for the wide spreading misery his duplicity had occasioned.

Very shortly after Miss Conway had imparted her melancholy story to Louisa,

she died in giving birth to a female infant. As the only friend interested in her fate, Mrs. Mason, her kind landlady, sent to Miss Fitzormond to inform her of what had taken place, and to receive instructions relative to the disposal of the infant, and the interment of the unfortunate mother.

Louisa, shocked beyond measure at a catastrophe, though not entirely unlooked for, yet so sudden, was greatly distressed, not knowing how to proceed. She had been confined to the house two days with a slight fever, which had prevented her attending Lady Stanley and her family, who were gone on a visit to Wells.

With great reluctance Miss Stanley had accompanied her mother's party, as she wished to have staid with Louisa; but the latter had prevailed on her to go, assuring her she should very soon be quite well, if left to herself.

Thus persuaded, Miss Stanley left her, and though their visit was to the house of a gentleman to whom she secretly hoped to be united, yet she felt a pang of remorse for leaving her alone, and ill. The ill-humoured sarcasms of her sister, Lady Belmour, had not been unobserved by her; but she had cautiously avoided mentioning them to Louisa, whose delicacy she had been fearful of alarming. To Lady Belmour she had not been so reserved; she had reasoned and argued with her ladyship, on the very little grounds the latter had for jealousy; pointing out the well-known good principles of Louisa, and her utter detestation of every action inimical to the strictest honour and delicacy, in the most forcible manner. But all her rhetoric was lost on her sister, who, from having conceived an opinion, was determined pertinaciously to maintain it.

Louisa was not sorry to be thus left

for a short time; she had been prevented from visiting her *protégé* for some days, and though she had regularly sent to inquire after her, yet she anxiously wished to see her; as, from the accounts brought, she feared she would not long survive.

When the melancholy intelligence was brought her, though still very poorly, (for her indisposition had been of more consequence than she had at first apprehended,) she wrapped herself in a pelisse and close bonnet, and set out for Mrs. Mason's, accompanied by a female servant.

She had proceeded but a few steps, when her attention was arrested by the loud voice of a person pronouncing her name: she hastily turned, and to her surprise, recognised in the speaker Lord Belmour, who gaily advancing, began to congratulate her on her recovery.

"I was so very anxious to know how

you were," continued his lordship, "that I could not resist the temptation I felt to steal a march upon them all, and ride over this morning, to make personal inquiries respecting your health."

He was proceeding to rally Louisa on her being abroad almost disguised, when she interrupted him with a serious and dignified countenance:—

"Circumstances, in which you, my lord, are deeply concerned, have called me abroad; and, but that Providence seems to have directed you here at a time when I stand in need of advice and assistance, I should, instead of thanking you for your apparent polite attention, regret that you should have given yourself so much trouble: but if your lordship will accompany me, the motive for my being out will be explained."

Lord Belmour, much surprised by the

solemnity of her manner, and the perturbation of her looks, walked silently by her side till they arrived at Mrs. Mason's house.

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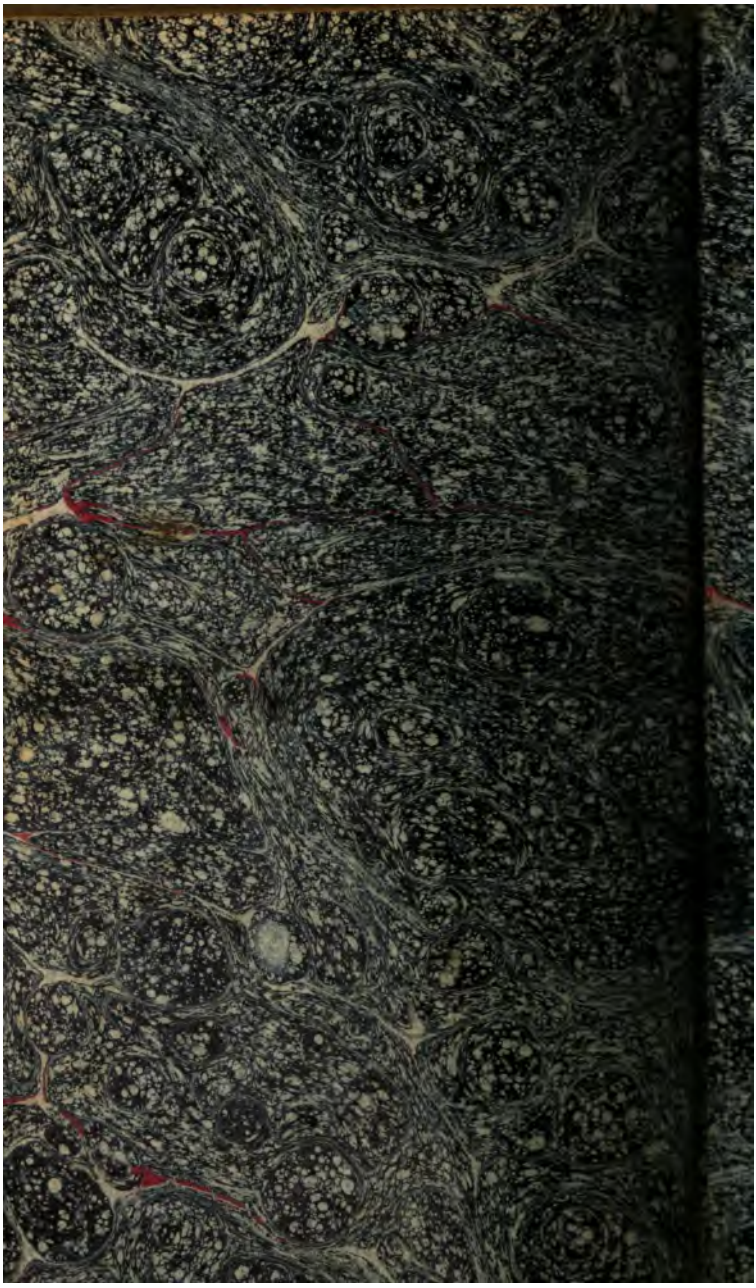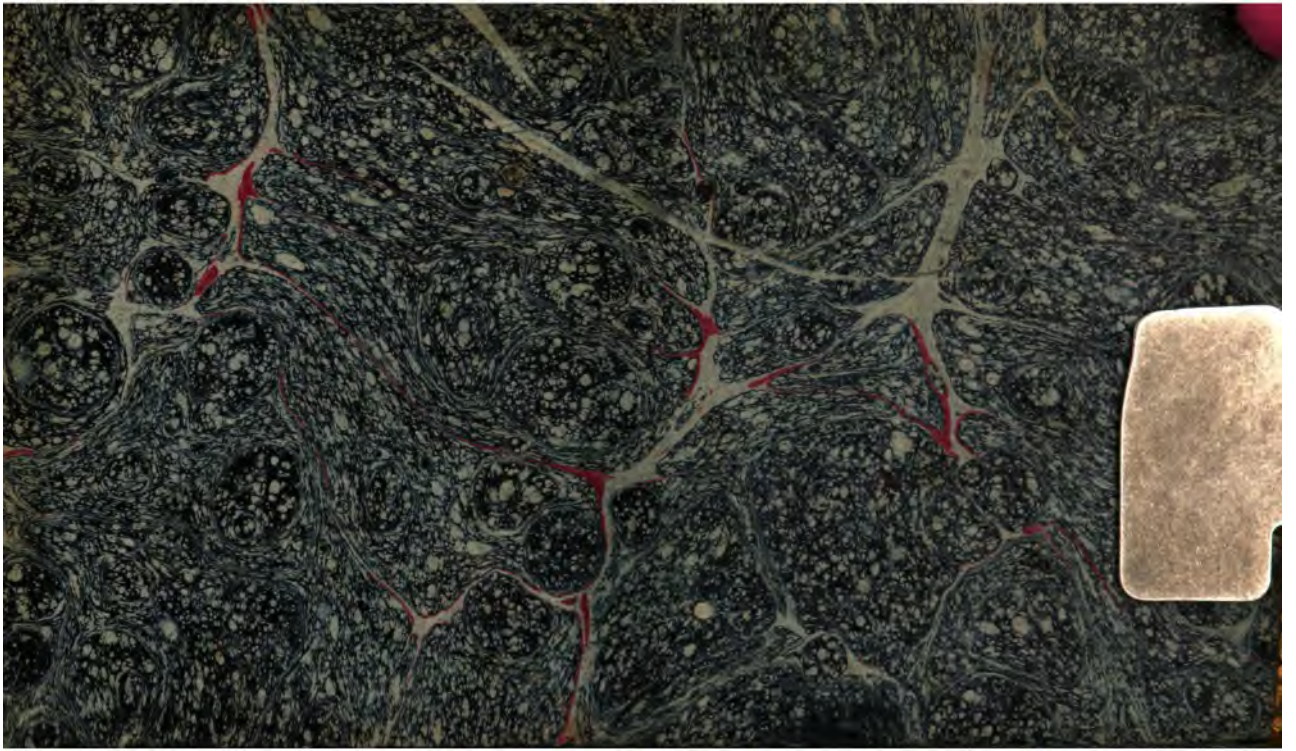
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